

# History of Africa

Archaic humans emerged out of Africa between 0.5 and 1.8 million years ago. This was followed by the emergence of modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) in East Africa around 300,000–250,000 years ago. In the 4th millennium BC written history arose in Ancient Egypt,<sup>[1]</sup> and later in Nubia's Kush, the Horn of Africa's D'mt, and Ifrikiya's Carthage.<sup>[2]</sup> Between around 3000 BCE and 500 CE, the Bantu expansion swept from north-western Central Africa (modern day Cameroon) across much of Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa, displacing or absorbing groups such as the Khoisan and Pygmies. The oral word is revered in most African societies, and history has generally been recorded via oral tradition. This has led anthropologists to term them "oral civilisations", contrasted with "literate civilisations" which pride the written word.<sup>[a][5]: 142–143</sup> Traditions were crafted utilising various sources from the community, performed, and passed down through generations.

Many kingdoms and empires came and went in all regions of the continent. Most states were created through conquest or the borrowing and assimilation of ideas and institutions, while some developed through internal, largely isolated development.<sup>[6]</sup> Some African empires and kingdoms include:

- Ancient Egypt, Kush, Carthage, Masuna, Makuria, the Fatimids, Almoravids, Almohads, Ayyubids, Mamluks, Marinids, and Hafsids in North Africa;
- Wagadu, Mali, Songhai, Jolof, Ife, Oyo, Benin, Bonoman, Nri, Ségou, Asante, Fante, Massina, Sokoto, Tukolor, and Wassoulou in West Africa;
- D'mt, Aksum, Ethiopia, Damot, Ifat, Adal, Ajuran, Funj, Kitara, Kilwa, Sakalava,<sup>[7]</sup> Imerina, Bunyoro, Buganda, and Rwanda in East Africa;
- Kanem-Bornu, Kongo, Anziku, Ndongo, Mwene Muji, Kotoko, Wadai, Mbunda, Luba, Lunda, Kuba, and Utetera in Central Africa; and
- Mapungubwe, Great Zimbabwe, Mutapa, Butua, Rozvi, Maravi, Lozi,<sup>[8]</sup> Lobedu,<sup>[9]</sup> Mthwakazi, and amaZulu in Southern Africa.

Some societies were heterarchical and egalitarian, while others remained organised into chiefdoms.<sup>[b][12]</sup> The continent has between 1250 and 2100 languages,<sup>[13]</sup> and at its peak it is estimated that Africa had around 10,000 polities, with most following traditional religions.<sup>[14]</sup>

From the 7th century CE, Islam spread west amid the Arab conquest of North Africa, and by proselytization to the Horn of Africa, bringing with it a new social system. It later spread southwards to the Swahili coast assisted by Muslim dominance of the Indian Ocean trade, and across the Sahara into the western Sahel and Sudan, catalysed by the Fula jihads of the 18th and 19th centuries. Systems of servitude and slavery were historically widespread and commonplace

in parts of Africa, as they were in much of the [ancient](#) and [medieval world](#).<sup>[15]</sup> When the [trans-Saharan](#), [Red Sea](#), [Indian Ocean](#) and [Atlantic](#) slave trades began, local slave systems started supplying captives for [slave markets](#) outside Africa. This reorientated many African economies, and created [various diasporas](#), especially [in the Americas](#).<sup>[16][17]</sup>

From 1870 to 1914, driven by the great force and hunger of the [Second Industrial Revolution](#), European [colonisation of Africa](#) developed rapidly, as the major European powers partitioned the continent in the 1884 [Berlin Conference](#), from one-tenth of the continent being under European imperial control to over nine-tenths in the [Scramble for Africa](#).<sup>[18][19]</sup> European colonialism had [significant impacts on Africa's societies](#), and colonies were maintained for the purpose of economic exploitation of human and [natural](#) resources. [Colonial historians](#) deprecated oral sources, claiming that Africa had no history other than that of Europeans in Africa. Pre-colonial Christian states include Ethiopia, Makuria, and Kongo. Widespread conversion to [Christianity](#) occurred under European rule in southern West Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa due to efficacious [missions](#), as people [syncretised Christianity](#) with their [local beliefs](#).<sup>[20]</sup>

The [rise of nationalism](#) facilitated struggles for independence in many parts of the continent, and, with a weakened Europe after the [Second World War](#), waves of [decolonisation](#) took place. This culminated in the 1960 [Year of Africa](#) and the establishment of the [Organisation of African Unity](#) in 1963 (the predecessor to the [African Union](#)), with countries deciding to keep their colonial borders.<sup>[21]</sup> [Traditional power structures](#), which had been incorporated into the colonial regimes, remained partly in place in many parts of Africa, and their roles, powers, and influence vary greatly. Political decolonisation was mirrored by a movement to decolonise [African historiography](#) by incorporating oral sources into a multidisciplinary approach, culminating in [UNESCO](#) publishing the [General History of Africa](#) from 1981. Many countries have undergone the triumph and defeat of nationalistic fervour, and continue to face challenges such as internal conflict, [neocolonialism](#), and [climate change](#).

## History in Africa

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In accordance with [African cosmology](#), African historical consciousness viewed historical change and continuity, order and purpose within the framework of human and their environment, the gods, and their ancestors, and they believed themselves part of a [holistic](#) spiritual entity.<sup>[22]</sup> In African societies, the historical process is largely a [communal](#) one, with eyewitness accounts, [hearsay](#), reminiscences, and occasionally [visions](#), dreams, and hallucinations crafted into narrative [oral traditions](#) which were performed and transmitted through generations.<sup>[23]:12[24]:48</sup> In oral traditions time is sometimes [mythical](#) and social, and ancestors were considered historical actors.<sup>[c][24]:43–53</sup> Mind and memory shapes traditions, as events are condensed over time and crystallise into [clichés](#).<sup>[25]:11</sup> Oral tradition can be [exoteric](#) or [esoteric](#). It speaks to people according to their understanding, unveiling itself in accordance with their aptitudes.<sup>[26]:168</sup>



In [African epistemology](#), the epistemic subject "experiences the epistemic object in a sensuous, emotive, intuitive, abstractive understanding, rather than through abstraction alone, as is the case in [Western epistemology](#)" to arrive at a "complete knowledge", and as such oral traditions, [music](#), [proverbs](#), and the like were used in the preservation and transmission of knowledge.<sup>[27]</sup>

## Early prehistory

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Side view of cast of "Lucy" in the [Naturmuseum Senckenberg](#)

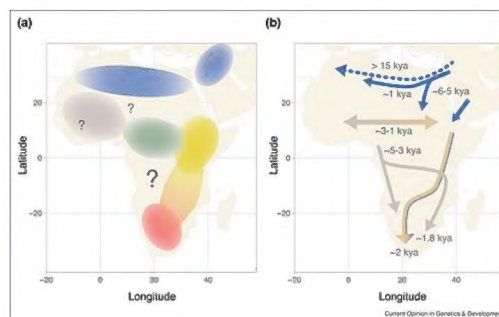
The first known [hominids](#) evolved in Africa. According to [paleontology](#), the early hominids' skull anatomy was similar to that of the [gorilla](#) and the [chimpanzee](#), [great apes](#) that also evolved in Africa, but the hominids had adopted a [bipedal](#) locomotion which freed their hands. This gave them a crucial advantage, enabling them to live in both forested areas and on the open [savanna](#) at a time when Africa was drying up and the savanna was encroaching on forested areas. This would have occurred 10 to 5 million years ago, but these claims are controversial because biologists and genetics have humans appearing around the last 70 thousand to 200 thousand years.<sup>[28]</sup>

The fossil record shows [Homo sapiens](#) (also known as "modern humans" or "anatomically modern humans") living in Africa by about 350,000–260,000 years ago. The earliest known *Homo sapiens* fossils include the [Jebel Irhoud](#) remains from Morocco (c. 315,000 years ago),<sup>[29]</sup> the [Florisbad Skull](#) from South Africa (c. 259,000 years ago), and the [Omo remains](#) from Ethiopia (c. 233,000 years ago).<sup>[30][31][32][33][34]</sup> Scientists have suggested that *Homo sapiens* may have arisen between 350,000 and 260,000 years ago through a merging of populations in [East Africa](#) and [South Africa](#).<sup>[35][36]</sup>

Evidence of a variety of behaviors indicative of [Behavioral modernity](#) date to the African [Middle Stone Age](#), associated with early *Homo sapiens* and their emergence. Abstract imagery, widened subsistence strategies, and other "modern" behaviors have been discovered from that period in Africa, especially South, North, and East Africa.

The [Blombos Cave](#) site in South Africa, for example, is famous for rectangular slabs of [ochre](#) engraved with [geometric](#) designs. Using multiple dating techniques, the site was confirmed to be around 77,000 and 100–75,000 years old.<sup>[37][38]</sup> Ostrich egg shell containers engraved with geometric designs dating to 60,000 years ago were found at [Diepkloof](#), South Africa.<sup>[39]</sup> Beads and other personal ornamentation have been found from Morocco which might be as much as 130,000 years old; as well, the Cave of Hearths in South Africa has yielded a number of beads dating from significantly prior to 50,000 years ago,<sup>[40]</sup> and shell beads dating to about 75,000 years ago have been found at Blombos Cave, South Africa.<sup>[41][42][43]</sup>

Around 65–50,000 years ago, the species' expansion [out of Africa](#) launched the colonization of the planet by modern human beings.<sup>[44][45][46][47]</sup> By 10,000 BC, *Homo sapiens* had spread to most corners of [Afro-Eurasia](#). Their dispersals are traced by linguistic, cultural and [genetic](#) evidence.<sup>[48][49][50]</sup> Eurasian back-migrations, specifically [West-Eurasian backflow](#), started in the early [Holocene](#) or already earlier in the [Paleolithic](#) period, sometimes between 30 and 15,000 years ago, followed by pre-Neolithic and [Neolithic](#) migration waves from the Middle East, mostly affecting Northern Africa, the Horn of Africa, and wider regions of the Sahel zone and East Africa.<sup>[51]</sup>



Pre-Neolithic and Neolithic migration events in Africa.<sup>[51]</sup>

[Affad 23](#) is an [archaeological site](#) located in the [Affad](#) region of southern Dongola Reach in northern [Sudan](#),<sup>[52]</sup> which hosts "the well-preserved remains of prehistoric camps (relics of the oldest [open-air hut](#) in the world) and diverse [hunting](#) and [gathering](#) loci some 50,000 years old".<sup>[53][54][55]</sup>

Around 16,000 BC, from the [Red Sea Hills](#) to the northern [Ethiopian Highlands](#), nuts, grasses and tubers were being collected for food. By 13,000 to 11,000 BC, people began collecting wild grains. This spread to [Western Asia](#), which domesticated its wild grains, [wheat](#) and [barley](#).



Between 10,000 and 8,000 BC, [Northeast Africa](#) was cultivating wheat and barley and raising sheep and cattle from Southwest Asia.

A wet climatic phase in Africa turned the Ethiopian Highlands into a mountain forest. [Omotic speakers](#) domesticated [enset](#) around 6,500–5,500 BC. Around 7,000 BC, the settlers of the Ethiopian highlands domesticated [donkeys](#), and by 4,000 BC domesticated donkeys had spread to Southwest Asia. [Cushitic](#) speakers, partially turning away from cattle herding, domesticated [teff](#) and [finger millet](#) between 5,500 and 3,500 BC.<sup>[56]</sup>

During the 11th millennium BP, pottery was independently invented in Africa, with the earliest pottery there dating to about 9,400 BC from central Mali.<sup>[57]</sup> It soon spread throughout the southern [Sahara](#) and [Sahel](#).<sup>[58]</sup> In the [steppes](#) and [savannahs](#) of the Sahara and Sahel in Northern West Africa, the [Nilo-Saharan speakers](#) and [Mandé peoples](#) started to collect and domesticate wild millet, [African rice](#) and [sorghum](#) between 8,000 and 6,000 BC. Later, [gourds](#), [watermelons](#), [castor beans](#), and [cotton](#) were also collected and domesticated. The people started capturing wild cattle and holding them in circular thorn hedges, resulting in [domestication](#).<sup>[59]</sup>

They also started making [pottery](#) and built stone settlements (e.g., [Tichitt](#), [Oualata](#)). [Fishing](#), using bone-tipped [harpoons](#), became a major activity in the numerous streams and lakes formed from the increased rains.<sup>[60]</sup> Mande peoples have been credited with the independent development of agriculture about 4,000–3,000 BC.<sup>[61]</sup>



9th-century bronze staff head in form of a coiled snake, [Igbo-Ukwu](#), Nigeria

Evidence of the early smelting of metals – [lead](#), [copper](#), and [bronze](#) – dates from the fourth millennium BC.<sup>[62]</sup>

Egyptians smelted copper during the [predynastic period](#), and bronze came into use after 3,000 BC at the latest<sup>[63]</sup> in Egypt and Nubia. Nubia became a major source of copper as well as of [gold](#).<sup>[64]</sup> The use of gold and [silver](#) in Egypt dates back to the predynastic period.<sup>[65][66]</sup>

In the [Aïr Mountains](#) of present-day [Niger](#) people smelted copper independently of developments in the Nile valley between 3,000 and 2,500 BC. They used a process unique to the region, suggesting that the technology was not brought in from outside; it became more mature by about 1,500 BC.<sup>[66]</sup>

By the 1st millennium BC [iron working](#) had reached [Northwestern Africa](#), Egypt, and Nubia.<sup>[67]</sup> Zangato and Holl document evidence of iron-smelting in the [Central African Republic](#) and Cameroon that may date back to 3,000 to 2,500 BC.<sup>[68]</sup> [Assyrians](#) using iron weapons pushed Nubians out of Egypt in 670 BC, after which the use of iron became widespread in the Nile valley.<sup>[69]</sup>

The theory that [iron](#) spread to [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) via the Nubian city of [Meroe](#)<sup>[70]</sup> is no longer widely accepted, and some researchers believe that sub-Saharan Africans invented iron metallurgy independently. [Metalworking](#) in West Africa has been dated as early as 2,500 BC at Egaro west of the [Termit](#) in Niger, and iron working was practiced there by 1,500 BC.<sup>[71]</sup> Iron smelting has been dated to 2,000 BC in southeast [Nigeria](#).<sup>[72]</sup> [Central Africa](#) provides possible evidence of iron working as early as the 3rd millennium BC.<sup>[73]</sup> Iron smelting developed in the area between [Lake Chad](#) and the [African Great Lakes](#) between 1,000 and 600 BC, and in West Africa around 2,000 BC, long before the technology reached Egypt. Before 500 BC, the [Nok culture](#) in the [Jos Plateau](#) was already smelting iron.<sup>[74][75][76][77][78][79]</sup> Archaeological sites containing iron-smelting furnaces and slag have been excavated at sites in the [Nsukka](#) region of southeast Nigeria in [Igboiland](#): dating to 2,000 BC at the site of [Lejja](#) (Eze-Uzomaka 2009)<sup>[72][80]</sup> and to 750 BC and at the site of [Opi](#) (Holl 2009).<sup>[80]</sup> The site of Gbabiri (in the Central African Republic) has also yielded evidence of iron metallurgy, from a reduction furnace and blacksmith workshop; with earliest dates of 896–773 BC and 907–796 BC respectively.<sup>[79]</sup>

# Ancient Africa (4000BC - 6th century)

## North-East Africa



Map of ancient Egypt, showing major cities and sites of the Dynastic period (c. 3150 BC to 30 BC)

From around 3,500 BCE, a coalition of **Horus-worshipping nomes** in the western **Nile Delta** conquered the **Andjety-worshipping nomes** of the east to form **Lower Egypt**, whilst **Set-worshipping nomes** in the south coalesced to form **Upper Egypt**.<sup>[81]:62–63</sup> Egypt was first united when **Narmer** of **Upper Egypt** conquered **Lower Egypt**, giving rise to the **1st** and **2nd** dynasties of Egypt whose efforts presumably consisted of conquest and consolidation, with unification completed by the **3rd dynasty** to form the **Old Kingdom of Egypt** in 2,686 BCE.<sup>[81]:63</sup> The **Kingdom of Kerma** emerged around this time to become the dominant force in Nubia, controlling an area as large as Egypt between the 1st and 4th **cataracts of the Nile**, with Egyptian records speaking of its rich and populous agricultural regions.<sup>[82][83]</sup>

The height of the **Old Kingdom** came under the **4th dynasty** who constructed numerous **great pyramids**, however under the **6th dynasty of Egypt** power began to decentralise to the **nomarchs**, culminating in anarchy exacerbated by drought and famine in 2,200 BCE, and the onset of the



**First Intermediate Period** in which numerous nomarchs ruled simultaneously. Throughout this time, power bases were built and destroyed in **Memphis**, and in **Heracleopolis**, when **Mentuhotep II** of **Thebes** and the **11th dynasty** conquered all of Egypt to form the **Middle Kingdom** in 2,055 BCE. The **12th dynasty** oversaw advancements in irrigation and economic expansion in the **Faiyum Oasis**, as well as expansion into **Lower Nubia** at the expense of **Kerma**. In 1,700 BCE, Egypt fractured in two, ushering in the **Second Intermediate Period**.<sup>[81]:68–71</sup>

The **Hyksos**, a militaristic people from **Palestine**, capitalised on this fragmentation and conquered Lower Egypt, establishing the **15th dynasty of Egypt**, whilst **Kerma** coordinated invasions deep into Egypt to reach its greatest extent, looting royal statues and monuments.<sup>[84]</sup> A rival power base developed in **Thebes** with **Ahmose I** of the **18th dynasty** eventually expelling the **Hyksos** from Egypt, forming the **New Kingdom** in 1,550 BCE. Utilising the military technology the **Hyksos** had brought, they conducted numerous campaigns to conquer the **Levant** from the **Canaanites**, **Amorites**, **Hittites**, and **Mitanni**, and extinguish **Kerma**, incorporating **Nubia** into the empire, sending the **Egyptian empire** into its golden age.<sup>[81]:73</sup> Internal struggles, drought and famine, and invasions by a **confederation of seafaring peoples**, contributed to the **New Kingdom's** collapse in 1,069 BCE, ushering in the **Third Intermediate Period** which saw Egypt fractured into many pieces amid widespread turmoil.<sup>[81]:76–77</sup>

Egypt's disintegration liberated the more Egyptianized **Kingdom of Kush** in Nubia, and later in the 8th century BCE the Kushite king **Kashta** would expand his power and influence by manoeuvring his daughter into a position of power in **Upper Egypt**, paving the way for his successor **Piye** to conquer **Lower Egypt** and form the **Kushite Empire**. The Kushites assimilated further into Egyptian society by reaffirming **Ancient Egyptian religious traditions**, and culture, while introducing some unique aspects of Kushite culture and overseeing a **revival in pyramid-building**. After a century of rule they were **forcibly driven out of Egypt** by the **Assyrians** as reprisal for the Kushites agitating peoples within the **Assyrian Empire** in an attempt to gain a foothold in the region.<sup>[85]</sup> The Assyrians installed a **puppet dynasty** which later gained independence and once more **unified Egypt**, with Upper Egypt becoming a rich agricultural region whose produce Lower Egypt then sold and traded.<sup>[81]:77</sup>

In 525 BCE Egypt was conquered by the expansionist **Achaemenids**, however later regained independence in 404 BCE until 343 BCE when it was re-annexed by the **Achaemenid Empire**. Persian rule in Egypt ended with the defeat of the Achaemenids by **Alexander the Great** in 332 BCE, marking the beginning of Hellenistic rule by the Macedonian **Ptolemaic dynasty** in Egypt. The Hellenistic rulers, seeking legitimacy from their Egyptian subjects, gradually Egyptianized and participated in **Egyptian religious life**.<sup>[86]:119</sup> Following the **Syrian Wars** with the **Seleucid Empire**, the **Ptolemaic Kingdom** lost its holdings outside Africa, but expanded its territory by conquering **Cyrenaica** from its respective tribes, and subjugated **Kush**.



Beginning in the mid second century BCE, dynastic strife and a series of foreign wars weakened the kingdom, and it became increasingly reliant on the [Roman Republic](#). Under [Cleopatra VII](#), who sought to restore Ptolemaic power, Egypt became entangled in a [Roman civil war](#), which ultimately led to its [conquest by Rome](#) in 30 BCE. The [Crisis of the Third Century](#) in the [Roman Empire](#) freed the Levantine city state of [Palmyra](#) who [conquered Egypt](#), however their rule lasted only a few years before Egypt was reintegrated into the [Roman Empire](#). In the midst of this, [Kush](#) regained total independence from Egypt, and they would persist as a major regional power until, having been weakened from internal rebellion amid worsening climatic conditions, invasions by both the [Aksumites](#) and the [Noba](#) caused their disintegration into [Makuria](#), [Alodia](#), and [Nobatia](#) in the 5th century CE. The Romans managed to [hold on to Egypt](#) for the rest of the ancient period.

## Horn of Africa



The [Kingdom of Aksum](#) in the 6th century AD.

In the [Horn of Africa](#) there was the [Land of Punt](#), a kingdom on the [Red Sea](#), likely located in modern-day [Eritrea](#) or northern [Somaliland](#).<sup>[87]</sup> The Ancient Egyptians initially traded via middle-men with Punt until in 2,350 BCE when they established direct relations. They would become close trading partners for over a millennium, with Punt exchanging [gold](#), aromatic [resins](#), [blackwood](#), [ebony](#), [ivory](#) and wild animals. Towards the end of the ancient period, northern [Ethiopia](#) and [Eritrea](#) bore the Kingdom of [D'mt](#) beginning in 980 BCE, whose people developed irrigation schemes, used [ploughs](#), grew [millet](#), and made [iron tools and weapons](#). In modern-day [Somalia](#) and [Djibouti](#) there was the [Macrobian Kingdom](#), with archaeological discoveries indicating the possibility of other unknown sophisticated civilisations at this time.<sup>[88][89]</sup>

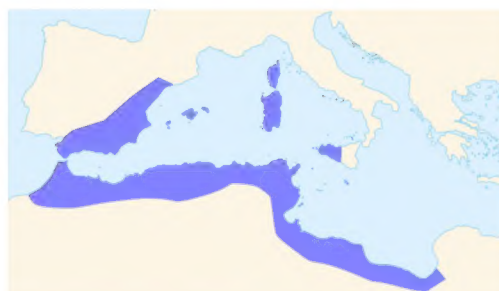
After D'mt's fall in the 5th century BCE the [Ethiopian Plateau](#) came to be ruled by numerous smaller unknown kingdoms who experienced strong [south Arabian influence](#), until the growth and expansion of [Aksum](#) in the 1st century BCE.<sup>[90]</sup> Along the Horn's coast there were many

ancient Somali city-states which thrived off of the wider Red Sea trade and transported their cargo via *beden*, exporting *myrrh*, *frankincense*, *spices*, *gum*, *incense*, and *ivory*, with freedom from Roman interference causing Indians to give the cities a lucrative monopoly on *cinnamon* from ancient India.<sup>[91]</sup>

The Kingdom of Aksum grew from a *principality* into a major power on the trade route between Rome and India through conquering its unfortunately unknown neighbours, gaining a monopoly on Indian Ocean trade in the region. Aksum's rise had them rule over much of the regions from the Lake Tana to the valley of the Nile, and they further conquered parts of the ailing Kingdom of Kush, led campaigns against the Noba and Beja peoples, and expanded into South Arabia.<sup>[92][93][94]</sup> This led the Persian prophet Mani to consider Aksum as one of the four great powers of the 3rd century CE alongside Persia, Rome, and China.<sup>[95]</sup> In the 4th century CE Aksum's king converted to Christianity and Aksum's population, who had followed syncretic mixes of local beliefs, slowly followed.

In the early 6th century CE, Cosmas Indicopleustes later described his visit to the city of Aksum, mentioning rows of throne monuments, some made out of "excellent white marble" and "entirely...hewn out of a single block of stone", with large inscriptions attributed to various kings, likely serving as victory monuments documenting the wars waged. The turn of the 6th century saw Aksum balanced against the Himyarite Kingdom in southwestern Arabia, as part of the wider Byzantine-Sassanian conflict. In 518, Aksum invaded Himyar against the persecution of the Christian community by Dhu Nuwas, the Jewish Himyarite king. Following the capture of Najran, the Aksumites implanted a puppet on the Himyarite throne, however a coup d'état in 522 brought Dhu Nuwas back to power who again began persecuting Christians. The Aksumites invaded again in 525, and with Byzantine aid conquered the kingdom, incorporating it as a vassal state after some minor internal conflict. In the late 6th century the Aksumites were driven out of Yemen by the Himyarite king with the aid of the Sassanids.

## North-West Africa



Carthaginian Empire in 323 BC

Further north-west, the Maghreb and Ifriqiya were mostly cut off from the cradle of civilisation in Egypt by the Libyan desert, exacerbated by Egyptian boats being tailored to the Nile and not coping well in the open Mediterranean Sea. This caused its societies to develop contiguous to



those of [Southern Europe](#), until [Phoenician settlements](#) came to dominate the most lucrative trading locations in the [Gulf of Tunis](#), initially searching for sources of [metal](#).<sup>[96]:247</sup> Phoenician settlements subsequently grew into [Ancient Carthage](#) after gaining independence from [Phoenicia](#) in the 6th century BCE, and they would build an [extensive empire](#), countering [Greek influence in the Mediterranean](#), as well as a strict [mercantile](#) network reaching as far as [west Asia](#) and [northern Europe](#), distributing an array of [commodities](#) from all over the [ancient world](#) along with locally produced goods, all secured by one of the largest and most powerful navies in the [ancient Mediterranean](#).<sup>[96]:251–253</sup>

Carthage's political institutions received rare praise from both Greeks and Romans, with its constitution and aristocratic council providing stability, with birth and wealth paramount for election.<sup>[96]:251–253</sup> In 264 BCE the [First Punic War](#) began when Carthage came into conflict with the expansionary [Roman Republic](#) on the island of [Sicily](#), leading to what has been described as the greatest [naval war](#) of antiquity, causing heavy casualties on both sides, but ending in Carthage's eventual defeat and loss of Sicily.<sup>[96]:255–256</sup> The [Second Punic War](#) broke out when the Romans opportunistically took [Sardinia](#) and [Corsica](#) whilst the Carthaginians were putting down a ferocious [Libyan revolt](#), with Carthage initially experiencing considerable success following [Hannibal's](#) infamous [crossing of the alps](#) into northern [Italy](#). In a 14 year long campaign Hannibal's forces conquered much of [mainland Italy](#), only being recalled after the Romans conducted a bold naval invasion of the [Carthaginian homeland](#) and then defeated him in [climactic battle](#) in 202 BCE.<sup>[96]:256–257</sup>



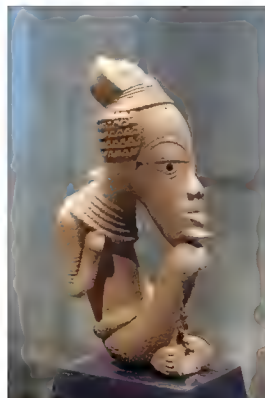
Romanised-Berber kingdoms: [Altava](#), [Ouarsenis](#), [Hodna](#), [Aures](#), [Nemencha](#), [Capsus](#), [Dorsale](#), [Cabaon](#).

Carthage was forced to give up their fleet, and the subsequent collapse of their empire would produce two further polities in the Maghreb; [Numidia](#), a polity made up of two [Numidian](#) tribal federations until the [Massylii](#) conquered the [Masaesyli](#), and assisted the Romans in the Second Punic War; [Mauretania](#), a [Mauri](#) tribal kingdom, home of the legendary [King Atlas](#); and various tribes such as [Garamantes](#), [Musulamii](#), and [Bavares](#). The [Third Punic War](#) would result in Carthage's total defeat in 146 BCE and the [Romans](#) established the province of [Africa](#), with [Numidia](#) assuming control of many of Carthage's African ports. Towards the end of the 2nd century BCE [Mauretania](#) fought alongside Numidia's [Jugurtha](#) in the [Jugurthine War](#) against the

Romans after he had usurped the Numidian throne from a Roman ally. Together they inflicted heavy casualties that quaked the [Roman Senate](#), with the war only ending inconclusively when Mauretania's [Bocchus I](#) sold out the [Jugurtha](#) to the Romans.<sup>[96]:258</sup>

At the turn of the millennium they both would face the same fate as Carthage and be conquered by the Romans who established [Mauretania](#) and [Numidia](#) as provinces of their empire, whilst [Musulamii](#), led by [Tacfarinas](#), and [Garamantes](#) were eventually defeated in war in the 1st century CE however weren't conquered.<sup>[97]:261–262</sup> In the 5th century CE the [Vandals](#) conquered north [Africa](#) precipitating the [fall of Rome](#). Swathes of [indigenous peoples](#) would regain self-governance in the [Mauro-Roman Kingdom](#) and its numerous successor polities in the Maghreb, namely the kingdoms of [Ouarsenis](#), [Aurès](#), and [Altava](#). The [Vandals](#) ruled [Ifriqiya](#) for a century until [Byzantine's reconquest](#) in the early 6th century CE. The Byzantines and the Berber kingdoms fought minor inconsequential conflicts, such as in the case of [Garmul](#), however largely coexisted.<sup>[97]:284</sup> Further inland to the Byzantine [Exarchate of Africa](#) were the [Sanhaja](#) in modern-day [Algeria](#), a broad grouping of three groupings of [tribal confederations](#), one of which is the [Masmuda](#) grouping in modern-day [Morocco](#), along with the nomadic [Zenata](#); their composite tribes would later go onto shape much of North African history.

## West Africa



Nok sculpture

In the western [Sahel](#) the rise of settled communities occurred largely as a result of the domestication of [millet](#) and of [sorghum](#). Archaeology points to sizable urban populations in West Africa beginning in the 4th millennium BCE, which had crucially developed [iron metallurgy](#) by 1,200 BCE, in both [smelting](#) and [forging](#) for tools and weapons.<sup>[98]</sup> Extensive east-west belts of [deserts](#), [grasslands](#), and [forests](#) from north to south were crucial in the moulding of their respective societies and meant that prior to the accession of [trans-Saharan trade routes](#), symbiotic trade relations developed in response to the opportunities afforded by north–south diversity in ecosystems,<sup>[99]:79–80</sup> trading [meats](#), [copper](#), [iron](#), [salt](#), and [gold](#).

Various civilisations prospered in this period. From 4,000 BCE, the [Tichitt culture](#) in modern-day [Mauritania](#) and [Mali](#) was the oldest known [complexly organised society](#) in West Africa, with a

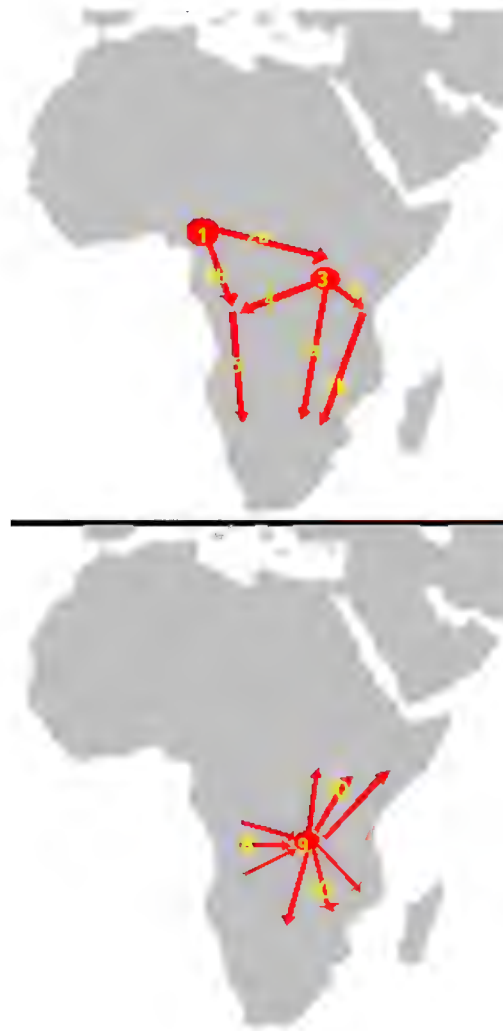


four tiered [hierarchical](#) social structure.<sup>[100]</sup> Other civilisations include the [Kintampo culture](#) from 2,500 BCE in modern-day [Ghana](#),<sup>[101]</sup> the [Nok culture](#) from 1,500 BCE in modern-day [Nigeria](#),<sup>[102]</sup> the [Daima culture](#) around [Lake Chad](#) from 550 BCE, and [Djenné-Djenno](#) from 250 BCE in modern-day [Mali](#).

Towards the end of the 3rd century CE, a [wet period](#) in the Sahel opened areas for human habitation and exploitation which had not been habitable for the better part of a millennium. Based on [large tumuli](#) scattered across West Africa dating to this period, it has been proposed that there were [several](#) contemporaneous kingdoms which have unfortunately been lost to history.<sup>[103][100]</sup> Some important polities likely founded in the early-to-middle 1st millennium who did make it into the historical record include [Mema](#), [Takrur](#), [Silla](#), and [Wagadu](#) (commonly called the Ghana Empire).

[Soninke traditions](#) mention four previous foundings of [Wagadu](#), and hold that the final founding of Wagadu occurred after their first king did a deal with [Bida](#), a serpent deity who was guarding a well, to sacrifice one maiden a year in exchange for assurance regarding plenty of rainfall and gold supply.<sup>[104]</sup> Soninke tradition portrays early Ghana as warlike, with horse-mounted warriors key to increasing its territory and population, although details of their expansion are extremely scarce.<sup>[105]</sup>

## Central, Eastern, and Southern Africa



1 = 2000–1500 BC origin

2 = c. 1500 BC first dispersal

2.a = Eastern Bantu

2.b = Western Bantu

3 = 1000–500 BC Urewe nucleus of Eastern Bantu

4–7 = southward advance

9 = 500–1 BC Congo nucleus

10 = AD 1–1000 last phase<sup>[106][107][108]</sup>

In the 4th millennium BCE the Congo Basin was inhabited by the Bambenga, Bayaka, Bakoya, and Babongo in the west, the Bambuti in the east, and the Batwa who were widely scattered and also present in the Great Lakes region; together they are grouped as Pygmies.<sup>[109]</sup> On the later-named Swahili coast there were Cushitic-speaking peoples, and the Khoisan (a neologism for the Khoekhoe and San) in the continent's south. Early San society left a rich legacy of cave paintings across Southern Africa.<sup>[110]:11–12</sup>



The [Bantu expansion](#) constituted a major series of migrations of [Bantu-speaking](#) peoples from Central Africa to Eastern and Southern Africa and was substantial in the settling of the continent.<sup>[111]</sup> Commencing in the 2nd millennium BCE, the Bantu began to migrate from [Cameroon](#) to the [Congo Basin](#), and eastward to the [Great Lakes region](#) to form the [Urewe culture](#) from the 5th century BC.<sup>[112][113]</sup> In the 7th century AD, Bantu spread to the [Upemba Depression](#), forming the [Upemba culture](#).<sup>[114]</sup>

During the 1st millennium BCE the Bantu spread further from the [Great Lakes](#) to Southern and East Africa. One early movement headed south to the upper [Zambezi basin](#) in the 2nd century BCE. The Bantu then split westward to the savannahs of present-day [Angola](#) and eastward into [Malawi](#), [Zambia](#), and [Zimbabwe](#) in the 1st century CE, forming the [Gokomere culture](#) in the 5th century CE.<sup>[115]</sup> The second thrust from the Great Lakes was eastward, also in the 1st century AD, expanding to [Kenya](#), [Tanzania](#), and the [Swahili coast](#).

Prior to this migration, the northern part of the [Swahili coast](#) was home to the elusive [Azania](#), most likely a [Southern Cushitic](#) polity, extending southwards to modern-day [Tanzania](#).<sup>[116]</sup> The Bantu populations crowded out [Azania](#), with [Rhapta](#) being its last stronghold by the 1st century CE,<sup>[117]</sup> and traded via the [Indian Ocean trade](#).<sup>[118]</sup> [Madagascar](#) was possibly first settled by [Austronesians](#) from 350 BC-550 CE, termed the [Vazimba](#) in [Malagasy](#) oral traditions, although there is considerable academic debate.<sup>[119][120]</sup>

The eastern Bantu group would eventually meet with the southern migrants from the Great Lakes in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe and both groups continued southward, with eastern groups continuing to [Mozambique](#) and reaching [Maputo](#) in the 2nd century CE. Further to the south, settlements of Bantu peoples who were iron-using agriculturists and herdsmen were well established south of the [Limpopo River](#) by the 4th century CE, displacing and assimilating the [Khoisan](#).

By the [Chari River](#) south of [Lake Chad](#) the [Sao civilisation](#) flourished for over a millennium beginning in the 6th century BCE, in territory that later became part of present-day [Cameroon](#) and [Chad](#). Sao artifacts show that they were skilled workers in [bronze](#), [copper](#), and [iron](#),<sup>[121]:19</sup> with finds including bronze sculptures, terracotta statues of human and animal figures, coins, funerary urns, household utensils, jewellery, highly decorated pottery, and spears.<sup>[121]:19[122]:1051</sup> Nearby, around [Lake Ejagham](#) in south-west [Cameroon](#), the [Ekoi civilisation](#) rose circa 2nd century CE, and are most notable for constructing the [Ikom monoliths](#) and developing the [Nsibidi script](#).<sup>[123]</sup>

# Early Medieval Africa (600-1250)

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## North Africa

### Northern Africa

The turn of the 7th century saw much of North Africa controlled by the [Byzantine Empire](#). Christianity was the [state religion](#) of the empire, and [Semitic](#) and [Coptic](#) subjects in [Roman Egypt](#) faced persecution due to their 'heretical' [Miaphysite](#) churches, paying a heavy tax. The [Exarchate of Africa](#) covered much of [Ifriqiya](#) and the eastern [Maghreb](#), surrounded by numerous [Berber kingdoms](#) that followed Christianity heavily syncretised with [traditional Berber religion](#). The interior was dominated by various groupings of tribal confederations, namely the nomadic [Zenata](#), the [Masmuda](#) of Sanhaja in modern-day [Morocco](#), and the other two [Sanhaja](#) in the Sahara in modern-day [Algeria](#), who all mainly followed [traditional Berber religion](#). In 618 the [Sassanids conquered Egypt](#) during the [Byzantine-Sasanian War](#), however the province was reconquered three years later.<sup>[124]: 56</sup>



The [Umayyad Caliphate](#) at its greatest extent, under Caliph [Umar II](#), c. 720

The early 7th century saw the [inception of Islam](#) and the beginning of the [Arab conquests](#) intent on converting peoples to [Islam](#) and [monotheism](#).<sup>[124]: 56</sup> The nascent [Rashidun Caliphate](#) won a series of crucial victories and expanded rapidly, forcing the [Byzantines](#) to evacuate Syria. With [Byzantine](#) regional presence shattered, Egypt was quickly conquered by 642, with the [Egyptian Copts](#) odious of [Byzantine rule](#) generally putting up little resistance. The Muslims' attention then turned west to the Maghreb where the [Exarchate of Africa](#) had declared independence from Constantinople under [Gregory the Patrician](#). The Muslims conquered [Ifriqiya](#) and in 647 defeated and killed Gregory and his army decisively in [battle](#). The [Berbers](#) of the Maghreb proposed payment of annual tribute, which the Muslims, not wishing to annex the territory, accepted. After a [brief civil war](#) in the Muslim empire, the [Rashidun](#) were supplanted by the [Umayyad dynasty](#) in 661 and the capital moved from [Medina](#) to [Damascus](#).<sup>[125]: 47–48</sup>



With intentions to expand further in all directions, the Muslims returned to the Maghreb to find the [Byzantines](#) had reinforced the [Exarchate](#) and allied with the Berber [Kingdom of Altava](#) under [Kusaila](#), who was approached prior to battle and convinced to convert to Islam. Initially having become neutral, Kusaila objected to integration into the empire and in 683 destroyed the poorly supplied Arab army and conquered the newly-found [Kairouan](#), causing an epiphany among the Berber that this conflict was not just against the Byzantines. The Arabs returned and defeated Kusaila and [Altava](#) in 690, and, after a set-back, expelled the [Byzantines](#) from North Africa. To the west, [Kahina](#) of the [Kingdom of the Aurès](#) declared opposition to the Arab invasion and repelled their armies, securing her position as the uncontested ruler of the Maghreb for five years. The Arabs received reinforcements and in 701 Kahina was killed and the [kingdom](#) defeated. They completed their conquest of the rest of the Maghreb, with large swathes of Berbers embracing Islam, and the combined Arab and Berber armies would use this territory as a springboard [into Iberia](#) to expand the Muslim empire further.<sup>[125]: 47–48</sup>

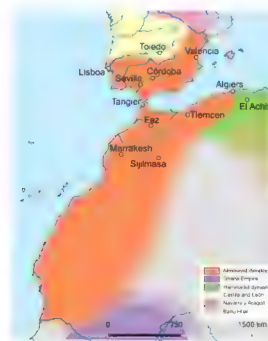
Large numbers of [Berber](#) and [Coptic](#) people willingly converted to Islam, and followers of [Abrahamic religions](#) ("People of the Book") constituting the [Dhimmi](#) class were permitted to practice their religion and exempted from military service in exchange for a [tax](#), which was improperly extended to include converts.<sup>[126]: 247</sup> Followers of [traditional Berber religion](#), which were mostly those of tribal confederations in the interior, were violently oppressed and often given the ultimatum to convert to Islam or face captivity or enslavement.<sup>[125]: 46</sup> Converted natives were permitted to participate in the governing of the Muslim empire in order to quell the enormous administrative problems owing to the Arabs' lack of experience governing and rapid expansion.<sup>[125]: 49</sup> Unorthodox sects such as the [Kharijite](#), [Ibadi](#), [Isma'ili](#), [Nukkarite](#) and [Sufrite](#) found fertile soil among many Berbers dissatisfied with the oppressive [Umayyad regime](#), with religion being utilised as a political tool to foster organisation.<sup>[124]: 64</sup> In the 740s the [Berber Revolt](#) rocked the caliphate and the Berbers took control over the Maghreb, whilst revolts in [Ifriqiya](#) were suppressed.

The [Abbasid dynasty](#) came to power [via revolution](#) in 750 and attempted to reconfigure the caliphate to be multi-ethnic rather than Arab exclusive, however this wasn't enough to prevent gradual disintegration on its peripheries. Various short-lived native dynasties would form states such as the [Barghawata](#) of [Masmuda](#), the [Ifranid dynasty](#), and the [Midrarid dynasty](#), both from the [Zenata](#). The [Idrisid dynasty](#) would come to rule most of modern-day [Morocco](#) with the support of the [Masmuda](#), whilst the growing [Ibadi movement](#) among the [Zenata](#) culminated in the [Rustamid Imamate](#), centred on [Tahert](#), modern-day [Algeria](#).<sup>[126]: 254</sup> At the turn of the 9th century the [Abbasids'](#) sphere of influence would degrade further with the [Aghlabids](#) controlling [Ifriqiya](#) under only nominal [Abbasid](#) rule and in 868 when the [Tulunids](#) wrestled the independence of Egypt for four decades before again coming under [Abbasid](#) control.<sup>[127]: 172, 260</sup> Late in the 9th century, a [revolt by East African slaves](#) in the [Abbasid's](#) homeland of [Iraq](#) diverted its resources away from its other territories, devastating important ports in the [Persian Gulf](#), and was

eventually put down after decades of violence, resulting in between 300,000 and 2,500,000 dead.<sup>[128][129]:714</sup>



Evolution of the [Fatimid Caliphate](#)



The [Almoravid empire](#)  
in the 12th century.

This gradual bubbling of disintegration of the caliphate boiled over when the [Fatimid dynasty](#) rose out of the [Bavares](#) tribal confederation and in 909 conquered the [Aghlabids](#) to gain control over all of [Ifriqiya](#). Proclaiming [Isma'ilism](#), they established a [caliphate](#) rivalling the [Abbasids](#), who followed [Sunni Islam](#).<sup>[130]:320</sup> The nascent caliphate quickly conquered the ailing [Rustamid Imamate](#) and fought a [proxy war](#) against the remnants of the [Umayyad dynasty](#) centred in [Cordoba](#), resulting the eastern Maghreb coming under the control of the vassalized [Zirid dynasty](#), who hailed from the [Sanhaja](#).<sup>[130]:323</sup> In 969 the [Fatimids](#) finally conquered [Egypt](#) against a weakened [Abbasid Caliphate](#) after decades of attempts, moving their capital to [Cairo](#) and deferring [Ifriqiya](#) to the [Zirids](#). From there they conquered up to modern-day [Syria](#) and [Hejaz](#), securing the holy cities of [Mecca](#) and [Medina](#). The [Fatimids](#) became absorbed by the eastern realms of their empire, and in 972, after encouragement from [faqirs](#), the [Zirids](#) changed their allegiance to recognise the [Abbasid Caliphate](#).<sup>[130]:329</sup>

In retaliation the [Fatimids](#) commissioned an [invasion by nomadic Arab tribes](#) to punish them, leading to their disintegration with the [Khurasanid dynasty](#) and Arab tribes ruling [Ifriqiya](#), to be later displaced by the [Norman Kingdom of Africa](#).<sup>[130]:329</sup> In the late 10th and early 11th centuries the [Fatimids](#) would lose the Maghreb to the [Hammadids](#) in modern-day [Algeria](#) and the [Maghrawa](#) in modern-day [Morocco](#), both from [Zenata](#). In 1053 the Saharan [Sanhaja](#), spurred on by puritanical [Sunni Islam](#), conquered [Sijilmasa](#) and captured [Aoudaghost](#) from the [Ghana Empire](#) to control the affluent [trans-Saharan trade routes](#) in the [Western Sahara](#), forming the [Almoravid empire](#) before conquering [Maghrawa](#) and intervening in the [reconquest of Iberia](#) by the Christian powers on the side of the endangered Muslim [taifas](#), which were produced from the

fall of the remnant [Umayyad Caliphate in Cordoba](#). The [Almoravids](#) incorporated the [taifas](#) into their empire, enjoying initial success, until a devastating ambush crippled their military leadership, and throughout the 12th century they gradually lost territory to the Christians.<sup>[131]:351–354</sup>

To the east, the [Fatimids](#) saw their empire start to collapse in 1061, beginning with the loss of the holy cities to the [Sharifate of Mecca](#) and exacerbated by rebellion in [Cairo](#). The [Seljuk Turks](#), who saw themselves as the guardian of the [Abbasid Caliphate](#), capitalised and conquered much of their territories in the east, however the [Fatimids](#) repelled them from encroaching on Egypt. Amid the Christians' [First Crusade](#) against the [Seljuks](#), the [Fatimids](#) opportunistically took back [Jerusalem](#), but then lost it again to the Christians in [decisive defeat](#). The [Fatimids'](#) authority collapsed due to intense internal struggle in political rivalries and religious divisions, amid [Christian invasions of Egypt](#), creating a [power vacuum](#) in North Africa. The [Zengid dynasty](#), nominally under Seljuk [suzerainty](#), invaded on the pretext of defending Egypt from the Christians, and usurped the position of [vizier](#) in the caliphate.<sup>[132]:186–189</sup>



The [Marinids](#), [Zayyanids](#), and [Hafsidids](#) c. 1360

Following the assassination of the previous holder, the position of [vizier](#) passed onto [Salah ad-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub](#) (commonly referred to as [Saladin](#)). After a joint [Zengid-Fatimid](#) effort repelled the Christians and after he had put down a [revolt from the Fatimid army](#), Saladin eventually deposed the [Fatimid caliph](#) in 1171 and established the [Ayyubid dynasty](#) in its place, choosing to recognise the [Abbasid Caliphate](#). From there the [Ayyubids](#) captured [Cyrenaica](#), and went on a [prolific campaign](#) to conquer Arabia from the [Zengids](#) and the [Yemeni Hamdanids](#), Palestine from the Christian [Kingdom of Jerusalem](#), and [Syria](#) and [Upper Mesopotamia](#) from other [Seljuk successor states](#).<sup>[133]:148–150</sup> To the west, there was a new domestic threat to [Almoravid](#) rule; a religious movement headed by [Ibn Tumart](#) from the [Masmuda](#) tribal grouping, who was considered by his followers to be the true [Mahdi](#). Initially fighting a [guerilla war](#) from the [Atlas Mountains](#), they descended from the mountains in 1130 but were [crushed in battle](#), with Ibn Tumart dying shortly after.<sup>[134]:8–23</sup>

The movement consolidated under the leadership of self-proclaimed [caliph Abd al-Mu'min](#) and, after gaining the support of the [Zenata](#), swept through the Maghreb, conquering the [Hammadids](#), the [Hilalian Arab tribes](#), and the [Norman Kingdom of Africa](#), before gradually conquering the Almoravid remnant in [Al-Andalus](#), proclaiming the [Almohad Caliphate](#) and extending their rule



from the western Sahara and Iberia to Ifriqiya by the turn of the 13th century. Later, the Christians capitalised on internal conflict within the [Almohads](#) in 1225 and conquered Iberia by 1228, with the [Emirate of Granada](#) assuming control in the south. Following this, the embattled [Almohads](#) faced [invasions from an Almoravid remnant](#) in the [Balearics](#) and gradually lost territory to the [Marinids](#) in modern-day [Morocco](#), the [Zayyanids](#) in modern-day [Algeria](#), both of [Zenata](#), and the [Hafsids](#) of [Masmuda](#) in modern-day [Tunisia](#), before finally being extinguished in 1269.<sup>[134]:8–23</sup> Meanwhile, after defeating the Christians' [Fifth Crusade](#) in 1221, internal divisions involving Saladin's descendants appeared within the [Ayyubid dynasty](#), crippling the empire's unity. In the face of [Mongol expansion](#), the [Ayyubids](#) became increasingly reliant on [Mamluk](#) generals.

## Nubia

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## East Africa

### Horn of Africa

At the end of the 6th century, the [Kingdom of Aksum](#) ruled over much of modern-day [Ethiopia](#) and [Eritrea](#), with the [Harla Kingdom](#) to its east, while [ancient Somali city-states](#) such as [Mosylon](#), [Opone](#), [Sarapion](#), [Avalites](#), and [Aromata](#) on the [Somali Peninsula](#) continued to thrive off of the lucrative [Indian Ocean trade](#) and their preferential relations with India.

Following the [birth of Islam](#) in the early 7th century, the north-central [Harar Plateau](#) was settled by [early Muslims](#) fleeing [persecution](#), intermingling with the [Somali](#) who became some of the first non-Arabs to convert to [Islam](#).<sup>[135]</sup> Muslim-Aksumite relations were initially positive with Aksum [giving refuge to early Muslims](#) in 613, however relations soured after Aksum made incursions along the Arab coast and [Muslims settled the Dahlak archipelago](#).<sup>[136]:560</sup> Despite having ancient roots, the [Red Sea slave trade](#) expanded and flourished following the [Muslim conquests](#) with [Bejas](#), [Nubians](#), and [Ethiopians](#) exported to [Hejaz](#).<sup>[137]</sup> Aksum gradually lost their control of the [Red Sea](#), and the expulsion of the Byzantines from the region isolated them, causing their society to become introspective, drawing inspiration from biblical traditions of the [Old Testament](#).<sup>[138]:108</sup>

Meanwhile, during the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries [Islam spread](#) through the [Somali Peninsula](#), largely via [da'wah](#). The [Harla Kingdom](#) of [Hubat](#) also converted to Islam circa 700. The Somalis were organised into [various clans](#), and relations with Arabs led [tradition](#) to hold their lineages to [Samaale](#), [Daarood](#) or [Sheikh Ishaq](#), traditionally descendants of [Muhammad's cousins](#). To the west from the 7th to 15th century, [Arab tribes migrated into the Sudan](#), during which time the [Beja](#) Islamised and [adopted Arab customs](#). In the 8th century, [Beja](#) nomads invaded [Aksum's](#) northern territories and occupied the [Eritrean Highlands](#), leading punitive raids into Aksum, with

the Beja establishing various kingdoms. The Aksumite population migrated further inland into the Ethiopian Highlands, moving their capital from Aksum to Kubar, and later in the 9th century expanded southwards.<sup>[136]: 563–564</sup><sup>[139]</sup>

The history becomes murky, however tradition holds that Aksum's expansion brought it into conflict in 960 with the Jewish Kingdom of Beta Israel, led by queen Gudit and located in the Simien Mountains. Accordingly, Gudit defeated and killed Aksum's king, and burnt their churches.<sup>[139]</sup> It's possible that Gudit was a pagan queen who led resistance to Aksum's southward expansion.<sup>[138]: 108</sup> To the east in the 9th and 10th centuries, the Somali clans such as the Dir and other groups formed states in the Harar Plateau, including Fatagar, Dawaro, Bale, Hadiya, Hargaya, Mora, Kwelgora, and Adal, with the latter centred on the port city of Zeila (previously Avalites).<sup>[140]</sup> They neighboured the Sultanate of Shewa to their south, whose dynasty hailed from the Meccan Banu Makhzum. On the Horn's southeast coast the Tunni clan established the Tunni Sultanate, and the clans of Sarapion formed the Sultanate of Mogadishu.

Traditionally, Gudit's dynasty reigned until 1137 when they were overthrown or conquered by Mara Takla Haymanot who established the Zagwe dynasty, with traditions differing on whether he was an Aksumite general or relative of Gudit. In Ethiopia tradition holds that prior to his accession to the throne, Gebre Meskel Lalibela was guided by Christ on a tour of Jerusalem, and instructed to build a second Jerusalem in Ethiopia.<sup>[138]: 115</sup> Accordingly, this led to the commissioning of eleven rock-hewn churches outside the capital in Roha, which was renamed Lalibela in his honour, and quickly became a holy city in Ethiopian Christianity. Possibly formed in the 10th century, the Kingdom of Damot, following a traditional religion, had become a powerful state by the 13th century (and is possibly synonymous with the Kingdom of Wolaita founded by Motolomi Sato).<sup>[141]</sup><sup>[142]</sup><sup>[143]: 59</sup>

The history continues to be murky, however regional hegemony was contested between the Kingdom of Damot, the Zagwe, and the Sultanate of Shewa.<sup>[144]: 431</sup> Damot likely drew its economic power from gold production, which was exported to Zeila.<sup>[145]</sup> The Zagwe and Shewa were forced into a conditional alliance to counter Damot, with Shewa at times forced to pay tribute to the pagans.<sup>[146]</sup> In the 13th century the Ajuran clan established the Ajuran Sultanate on the eastern coast of the Horn and expanded, conquering the Tunni and vassalising Mogadishu, coming to dominate the Indian Ocean trade, while the Warsangali clan formed the Warsangali Sultanate on the Horn's north-eastern coast.

### Swahili coast, Madagascar, and the Comoro Islands

The turn of the 7th century saw the Swahili coast continue to be inhabited by the Swahili civilisation, whose economies were primarily based on agriculture, however they traded via the Indian Ocean trade and later developed local industries, with their iconic stone architecture.<sup>[147]: 587, 607–608</sup><sup>[148]</sup> Forested river estuaries created natural harbours whilst the

yearly monsoon winds assisted trade,<sup>[149][150]</sup> and the Swahili civilisation consisted of **hundreds of settlements** and linked the societies and kingdoms of the interior, such as those of the **Zambezi basin** and the **Great Lakes**, to the wider **Indian Ocean trade**.<sup>[147]:614–615</sup> There is much debate around the chronology of the settlement of **Madagascar**, although most scholars agree that the island was further settled by **Austronesian peoples** from the 5th or 7th centuries AD who had proceeded through or around the **Indian Ocean** by **outrigger boats**, to also settle the **Comoros**.<sup>[151][152]</sup> This second wave possibly found the island of Madagascar sparsely populated by descendants of the first wave a few centuries earlier, with the **Vazimba** of the **interior's highlands** being represented as primitive dwarves in **Malagasy oral traditions** and revered.<sup>[153]:71</sup>



The Kilwa Sultanate in 1310

The wider region underwent a trade expansion from the 7th century, as the **Swahili** engaged in the flourishing **Indian Ocean trade** following the **early Muslim conquests**.<sup>[147]:612–615</sup> Settlements further centralised and some major states included **Gedi**, **Ungwana** [de], **Pate**, **Malindi**, **Mombasa**, and **Tanga** in the north, **Unguja Ukuu** on **Zanzibar**, **Kaole**, **Dar es Salaam**, **Kilwa**, **Kiswere**, **Monapo**, **Mozambique**, and **Angoche** in the middle, and **Quelimane**, **Sofala**, **Chibuene**, and **Inhambane** in the south.<sup>[148]</sup> Via **mtumbwi**, **mtepe** and later **ngalawa** they exported **gold**, **iron**, **copper**, **ivory**, **slaves**, **pottery**, **cotton cloth**, **wood**, **grain**, and **rice**, and imported **silk**, **glassware**, **jewellery**, **Islamic pottery**, and **Chinese porcelain**.<sup>[149]</sup> Relations between the states fluctuated and varied, with **Mombasa**, **Pate**, and **Kilwa** emerging as the strongest. This prosperity led some Arab and Persian merchants to settle and assimilate into the various societies, and from the 8th to the 14th century the region gradually Islamised due to the increased trading opportunities it brought, with some **oral traditions** having rulers of **Arab or Persian descent**.<sup>[147]:605–607</sup>



The [Kilwa Chronicle](#), supposedly based on [oral tradition](#), holds that a [Persian prince](#) from [Shiraz](#) arrived and acquired the island of Kilwa from the local inhabitants, before quarrel with the Bantu king led to the severing Kilwa's [land bridge](#) to the mainland. Settlements in northern Madagascar such as [Mahilaka](#), [Irodo](#), and [Iharana](#) also engaged in the trade, attracting [Arab](#) immigration.<sup>[148]</sup> Bantu migrated to Madagascar and the Comoros from the 9th century, when [zebu](#) were first brought. From the 10th century [Kilwa](#) expanded its influence, coming to challenge the dominance of [Somalian Mogadishu](#) located to its north, however details of [Kilwa's](#) rise remain scarce. In the late 12th century [Kilwa](#) wrestled control of [Sofala](#) in the south, a key trading city linking to [Great Zimbabwe](#) in the interior and famous for its Zimbabwean gold, which was substantial in the usurpation of [Mogadishu's](#) hegemony, while also conquering [Pemba](#) and [Zanzibar](#). [Kilwa's](#) administration consisted of representatives who ranged from governing their assigned cities to fulfilling the role of ambassador in the more powerful ones. Meanwhile, the [Pate Chronicle](#) has [Pate](#) conquering [Shanga](#), [Faza](#), and prosperous [Manda](#), and was at one time led by the popular [Fumo Liyongo](#).<sup>[154]</sup> The islands of [Pemba](#), [Zanzibar](#), [Lamu](#), [Mafia](#) and the [Comoros](#) were further settled by [Shirazi](#) and grew in importance due to their geographical positions for trade.

By 1100, all regions of Madagascar were inhabited, although the total population remained small.<sup>[153]:48</sup> Societies organised at the behest of [hasina](#), which later evolved to embody kingship, and competed with one another over the [island's estuaries](#), with oral histories describing bloody clashes and earlier settlers often pushed along the coast or inland.<sup>[153]:43,52–53</sup> An Arab geographer wrote in 1224 that the island consisted of a great many towns and kingdoms, with kings making war on each other.<sup>[153]:51–52</sup> Assisted by climate change, the peoples gradually transformed the island from [dense forest](#) to grassland for cultivation and zebu [pastoralism](#).<sup>[153]:71</sup> From the 13th century [Muslim settlers](#) arrived, integrating into the respective societies, and held high status owing to Islamic trading networks.

## Northern Great Lakes

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## West Africa

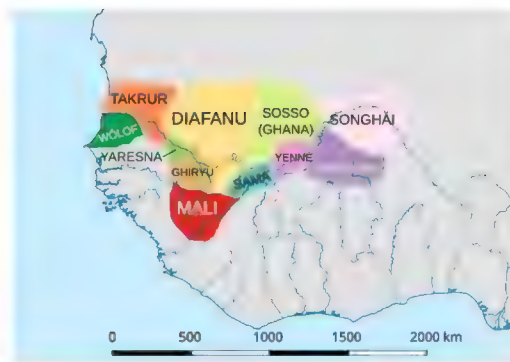
### The western Sahel and Sudan



The [Ghana Empire](#) at its greatest extent

The 7th to 13th centuries in West Africa were a period of relatively abundant rainfall that saw the explosive growth of trade, particularly across the [Sahara desert](#), and the flourishing of numerous important states.<sup>[155]</sup> The introduction of the [camel](#) to the western Sahel was a watershed moment, allowing more merchandise to move more easily.<sup>[105]</sup> These desert-side states are the first to appear in the written record, with Arab and Berber merchants from North Africa leaving descriptions of their power and wealth.<sup>[156]</sup> Nevertheless, there remain big gaps in the historical record, and many details are speculative and/or based on much later traditions.

One of the most powerful and well known of these states was [Wagadu](#), commonly called the Ghana Empire, likely the dominant player in the western Sahel from the 6th century onwards.<sup>[157]</sup> Wagadu was the most powerful of a constellation of states stretching from [Takrur](#) on the [Senegal river](#) valley to [Mema](#) in the Niger valley, all of whom were subservient to Ghana at least some of the time.<sup>[158]</sup> Like Wagadu, the [Gao Empire](#) which rose in the 7th century had at least seven kingdoms accepting their suzerainty. Both [Gao](#) and [Kumbi Saleh](#) (capital of Wagadu) grew fabulously rich through the [trans-Saharan trade](#) routes linking these cities with [Tadmekka](#), [Kairouan](#), and [Sijilmasa](#) in [North Africa](#) along which flowed trade in salt, gold, slaves, and more.<sup>[159][160][158][105]</sup>



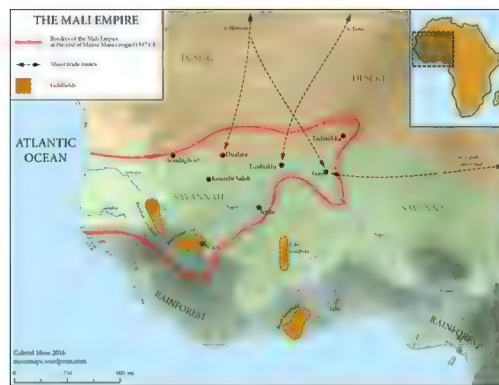
Map of the western Sahel and Sudan (northern West Africa) c. 1200. (Songhai is Gao)

Kingdoms in this era were centred around cities and cores, with variations of influence radiating out from these points, borders here are estimates.

The arrival of Islam in West Africa had seismic consequences for the history of the entire region. By the 10th century, the king of Gao had converted, possibly to Ibadi Islam.<sup>[161]</sup> In 1035 king War Jabi of Takrur became the first ruler to adopt Sunni Islam.<sup>[162]</sup> The rise of the Almoravid Sanhaja in the 1050s, perhaps inspired and supported by Muslims in Takrur, pushed the leaders of Sahelian states to institutionalize Islam in the subsequent decades.<sup>[163]</sup> Historians debate whether the Almoravids conquered Wagadu or merely dominated them politically but not militarily. In any case the period saw significant upheaval and a shift in trade patterns as previously important cities like Awdaghost and Tadmekka fell victim to the Almoravids and their allies.<sup>[d][165]</sup> In the confusion, some vassals achieved independence such as Mema, Sosso, and Diarra/Diafunu, with the last two being especially powerful.<sup>[157]</sup> Despite Wagadu regaining full independence and power throughout the 12th century, this could not counteract the worsening climate and shifts in trade south and east. Around the turn of the 13th century, the Sosso Empire united the region and conquered a weakened Ghana from its south, spurring large-scale Soninke out-migration.<sup>[e][167]</sup>

Sosso's Soumaoro Kante conquered Diarra, Gajaaga, and the Manding region.<sup>[168]</sup> According to the oral Epic of Sundiata, Sundiata Keita, a Mandinka prince in exile, returned to Manden to save his people of the tyrannical Sosso king. Sundiata unified the Mandinka clans, allied with Mema, and defeated Soumaoro Kante at the Battle of Kirina in the early 13th century. He then proclaimed the Kouroukan Fouga of the nascent Mali Empire.<sup>[169]</sup> Allied kingdoms, including Mema and Wagadu, retained leadership of their province, while conquered leaders were assigned a farin subordinate to the mansa (emperor), with provinces retaining a great deal of autonomy.<sup>[170]</sup>





The **Mali Empire** in 1337 CE, with major gold fields, of **Bambuk**, **Bure**, **Lobi** (tended by the **Gan** and later **Lobi people**), and **Akan**, and **trade routes**, outlined. The desert should extend further south to **Koumbi**. The **Mossi Kingdoms** are located north of Lobi.

In addition to campaigns in the north to subdue **Diafunu**, Mali established suzerainty over the highlands of **Fouta Djallon**.<sup>[171]</sup> After being insulted by the **Wolof** king of **Kita**, Sundiata sent **Tiramakhan Traore** west at the head of a large army, ultimately bringing most of **Senegambia** under the empire's control and, after defeating the **Bainuk** king, established dozens of Mandinka vassal kingdoms in the **Gambia** and **Casamance** basins, a region known as **Kaabu**.<sup>[172]</sup>

### Within the Niger bend and the forest region

While the precise timeline is unknown, archaeological evidence points to settlements in **Ile-Ife** being one of the earliest south of the Niger river, dating back as early as the 10th to 6th century BCE. The city gradually transitioned into a more urban center around the 4th to 7th centuries CE. By the 8th century, a powerful city-state had formed,<sup>[173]</sup> laying the foundation for the eventual rise of the **Ife Empire** (circa 1200–1420).<sup>[174]</sup> Under figures like the now defied figures such as **Oduduwa**, revered as the first divine king of the Yoruba, the Ife Empire grew. Ile-Ife, its capital, rose to prominence, its influence extending across a vast swathe of what is now southwestern Nigeria.

The period between 1200 and 1400 is often referred to as the "golden age" of Ile-Ife, marked by exceptional artistic production, economic prosperity, and urban development. The city's artisans excelled in crafting exquisite sculptures from bronze, terracotta, and stone. These works, renowned for their naturalism and technical mastery, were not only objects of aesthetic appreciation but also likely held religious significance, potentially reflecting the cosmology and belief systems of the Ife people.<sup>[175]</sup>

This artistic tradition coincided with Ile-Ife's role as a major commercial hub. The Ife Empire's strategic location facilitated its participation in extensive trade networks that spanned West Africa. Of note is the evidence of a thriving glass bead industry in Ile-Ife. Archaeological excavations have unearthed numerous glass beads, indicating local production and pointing to

the existence of specialized knowledge and technology. These beads, particularly the [dichroic](#) beads known for their iridescent qualities, were highly sought-after trade items, found as far afield as the [Sahel](#) region, demonstrating the far-reaching commercial connections of the Ife Empire.<sup>[174]</sup>

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## Central Africa

### The central Sahel and Cameroon

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In northern modern-day [Nigeria](#), [Hausa tradition](#) holds that [Bayajidda](#) came to [Daura](#) in the 9th century, and his descendants founded the [kingdoms](#) of [Daura](#), [Kano](#), [Rano](#), [Katsina](#), [Gobir](#), [Zazzau](#), and [Biram](#) in the 10th, 11th, and 12th centuries, with his bastard descendants founding [various others](#).<sup>[176]</sup> While the historical validity of these legends is unknowable, the Arab geographer [al-Yaqubi](#), writing in 872/873 CE (AH 259), describes a kingdom called "HBSH" with a city named "ThBYR" located between the Niger and the [Kanem–Bornu Empire](#) which may refer to Hausa.<sup>[177]</sup>

### The Congo Basin

Following the Bantu migrations, a period of state and class formation began circa 700 with four centres; one in the west around [Pool Malebo](#), one south around the [highlands of Angola](#), a third north-central around [Lake Mai-Ndombe](#), and a fourth in the far southeast in the [Upemba Depression](#).<sup>[178]:17–18</sup>

In the Upemba Depression social stratification and governance began to form after the 10th century based on villages.<sup>[178]:18–19</sup>

## Southern Africa

### Southern Great Lakes and the Zambezi and Limpopo basins

By the 4th century, [Bantu peoples](#) had established farming villages south of the [Zambezi River](#). The [San](#), having inhabited the region for around 100,000 years,<sup>[f]</sup> were driven off their ancestral lands or incorporated by Bantu speaking groups.<sup>[110]:11–12</sup> The Zambezi Plateau came to be dotted with the agricultural chiefdoms of the [Zhizo people](#) and [Leopard's Kopje](#) people, in which cattle was the primary identifier of wealth. External trade began around the 7th century, primarily exporting gold and ivory.<sup>[110]:14</sup> Around 900, motivated by the [ivory trade](#), some Zhizo moved south to settle the [Limpopo-Shashe](#) Basin. Their capital and most populated settlement was

Schroda, and via the coastal Swahili city-state Chibuene they engaged in the Indian Ocean trade.<sup>[180]:10–14</sup>

The 10th century saw increased global demand for gold as various Muslim, European, and Indian states began issuing gold coinage.<sup>[181]</sup> Around 1000, some Leopard's Kopje people moved south to settle Bambandyanalo (known as K2), as the Zhizo moved west to settle Toutswe in modern-day Botswana. Some scholars believe their relations to have been hostile, however others insist they were more complex, both socially and politically.<sup>[182]</sup> The San, who were believed to have closer connections to the old spirits of the land, were often turned to by other societies for rainmaking. The community at K2 chose the San rather than the Zhizo, their political rivals, because the San did not believe in ancestors, and by not acknowledging the Zhizo's ancestors they would not be held to ransom by them.<sup>[181]</sup>

Northwest, the community at Mapela Hill had possibly developed sacral kingship by the 11th century.<sup>[183][184]</sup> To the east, an early settlement was Gumanye.<sup>[185]</sup> Great Zimbabwe was founded around 1000 AD,<sup>[186]</sup> and construction on the city's iconic dry-stone walls began in the 11th century. From the 12th century Great Zimbabwe wrestled with other settlements, such as Chivowa, for economic and political dominance in the Southern Zambezi Escarpment.<sup>[187]</sup> Further south by 1200, K2 had a population of 1500.<sup>[180]:26–29</sup> The large wealth generated by the Indian Ocean trade created unprecedented inequalities, evolving over time from a society based on social ranking to one based on social classes. K2's spatial arrangement became unsuited to this development.<sup>[180]:30</sup>



Mapungubwe Hill, which features some ancient San art in a rock shelter on the east side.<sup>[188]</sup>

Amid a harsh drought which likely troubled the society,<sup>[181]</sup> royal elites moved the capital to Mapungubwe Hill and settled its flat-topped summit around 1220, while most people settled below, surrounding the sacred leader in a protective circle. Mapungubwe Hill became the sole rainmaking hill, and its habitation by the leader emphasised a link between himself and rainmaking, which was substantial in the development of sacral kingship.<sup>[180]:32–34</sup> The first king had their palace on the western part of the hill, and is called "Shiriyadenga" in Venda oral traditions.<sup>[189]</sup> His entourage included soldiers and praise singers, along with musicians who played mbiras and xylophones. The state likely covered 30,000 km<sup>2</sup> (12,000 square miles). They



traded locally with [Toutswe](#) and [Eiland](#) among others. High global demand saw gold and ivory exported to the [Indian Ocean trade](#) via [Sofala](#).<sup>[181][180]:38–51</sup> It is unclear to what extent coercion and conflict played in Mapungubwe's growth and dominance due to this being challenging to recognise archaeologically, however the stone walls likely served a defensive purpose, indicating warfare was conventional.<sup>[190]</sup>

## South of the Zambezi Basin

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# Medieval Africa (1250-1800)

## North Africa

### Northern Africa

c. 1250–1500



Extent of the [Mamluk Sultanate](#) under  
Sultan [Al-Nasir Muhammad](#)

The [Ayyubids](#) were in a precarious position. In 1248, the Christians began the [Seventh Crusade](#) with intent to conquer Egypt, but were [decisively defeated](#) by the embattled [Ayyubids](#) who had relied on [Mamluk](#) generals. The [Ayyubid sultan](#) attempted to alienate the victorious Mamluks, who revolted, killing him and seizing power in Egypt, with rule given to a military caste of [Mamluks](#) headed by the [Bahri dynasty](#), whilst the remaining [Ayyubid empire](#) was destroyed in the [Mongol invasions of the Levant](#). Following the [Mongol Siege of Baghdad](#) in 1258, the [Mamluks](#) re-established the [Abbasid Caliphate in Cairo](#), and over the next few decades conquered the [Crusader states](#) and, assisted by [civil war in the Mongol Empire](#), defeated the [Mongols](#), before consolidating their rule over the [Levant](#) and Syria.<sup>[133]:150–158</sup> To the west, the three dynasties vied for supremacy and control of the [trans-Saharan trade](#).<sup>[191]:34–43</sup>

Following the collapse of the [Abbasids](#), the [Hafsids](#) were briefly recognised as caliphs by the [sharifs of Mecca](#) and the [Mamluks](#). Throughout the 14th century, the [Marinids](#) intermittently

occupied the [Zayyanids](#) several times, and devastated the [Hafsids](#) in 1347 and 1357. The [Marinids](#) then succumbed to internal division, exacerbated by plague and financial crisis, culminating in the rise of the [Wattasid dynasty](#) from [Zenata](#) in 1472, with the [Hafsids](#) becoming the dominant power.<sup>[191]:34–43</sup> Throughout the 15th century, the [Spanish](#) colonised the [Canary Isles](#) in the first example of modern [settler colonialism](#), causing the genocide of the [native Berber population](#) in the process. To the east, the turn of the 15th century saw the [Mamluks](#) oppose the expansionist [Ottomans](#) and [Timurids](#) in the Middle East, with plague and famine eroding Mamlukian authority, until internal conflict was reconciled. The following decades saw the [Mamluks](#) reach their greatest extent with efficacious economic reforms, however the threat of the growing [Ottomans](#) and [Portuguese trading practices in the Indian Ocean](#) posed great challenges to the empire at the turn of the 16th century.

## East Africa

### Horn of Africa

c. 1250–1500

The 13th century saw power balanced between the [Zagwe dynasty](#), [Sultanate of Shewa](#), and [Kingdom of Damot](#), with the [Ajuran Sultanate](#) on the Horn's eastern coast.

In 1270, supported by the [Kebra Nagast](#) painting the [Zagwe](#) as illegitimate usurpers, [Yekuno Amlak](#) rebelled with assistance from [Shewa](#) and defeated the [Zagwe king](#) in battle, establishing the [Solomonic dynasty](#) of the nascent [Ethiopian Empire](#).<sup>[138]:131</sup> In accordance with the [Kebra Negast](#), they claimed their descent from the [last king of Aksum](#), and ultimately from Aksumite queen [Makeda](#) and the [Israelite king Solomon](#). Fifteen years later, in the [Sultanate of Shewa](#), which was exhausted following wars with [Damot](#) and suffering internal strife, was conquered by [Umar Walasma](#) of the [Walashma dynasty](#), who established the [Sultanate of Ifat](#).<sup>[138]:143</sup> Over the following decades [Ifat](#) incorporated the polities of [Adal](#), [Gidaya](#), [Bale](#), [Mora](#), [Hargaya](#), [Hubat](#), and [Fatagar](#) among others.<sup>[192][193]</sup> In the 13th century the [Afar](#) founded the [Dankali Sultanate](#) north of Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia [Amda Seyon I](#) came to the throne in 1314 and conquered [Harla](#), [Gojjam](#), [Hadiya](#), and crucially [Damot](#), with [Ennarea](#) splitting from the latter.<sup>[194][195]</sup> He also campaigned in the north where [Beta Israel](#) had been gaining prominence, and reconquered the Tigrayan [Enderta Province](#).<sup>[196]</sup> In 1321, a religious dispute between Amda Seyon and the [Mamluk sultan](#) which involved threats to tamper with the [Nile](#) gave [Ifat's Haqq ad-Din I](#) pretext to invade and execute an Ethiopian envoy. Seven years later, Amda Seyon's forces overwhelmed Ifat's outposts, defeated Ifat's armies and killed Haqq ad-Din, with lack of unity among the Muslims proving fatal.<sup>[197]</sup>

The Ethiopian emperor raided the Muslim states and made them tributaries.<sup>[197]</sup> Following this, sultan [Sabr ad-Din I](#) led a [rebellion](#) and [jihad](#) in 1332 seeking to restore prestige and rule a Muslim Ethiopia, garnering widespread support in the early stages from the Muslim states and even from nomads.<sup>[138]:145</sup> They were defeated by Amda Seyon, ushering in a golden age for the [Ethiopian Empire](#).<sup>[198]</sup> Ethiopia incorporated [Ifat](#), [Hadiya](#), [Dawaro](#), [Fatagar](#), and [Shewa](#) as one vassal headed by the [Walashma dynasty](#).<sup>[197]</sup> The Ethiopian emperor ruled the Muslim states by [divide and rule](#), and had the final say on succession, with various sultans and [sheikhs](#) drawn to his court.<sup>[138]:148</sup>

Successive sultans rebelled and struggled to shake off Ethiopian vassalage, moving Ifat's capital to [Adal](#) in an attempt to escape Ethiopia's sphere of control. To the south-west according to oral traditions, Amda Seyon expanded into the [Gurage](#).<sup>[196]:75–76</sup> According to oral traditions, the [Kingdom of Kaffa](#) was established in 1390 after "ousting a dynasty of 32 kings".<sup>[199]</sup> In the late 14th century the sultans began to expand eastwards into the decentralised Somali interior. [Sa'ad ad-Din II](#) propagated insecurity on Ethiopia's eastern frontier, however was defeated by [Dawit I](#). The sultan was repeatedly pursued by the Ethiopian emperor to [Zeila](#) on the coast and killed in 1415, leaving the former [Sultanate of Ifat](#) fully occupied.<sup>[138]:150–154</sup>

In 1415 [Sabr ad-Din III](#) of the [Walashma dynasty](#) returned to the region from exile to establish the [Adal Sultanate](#). The Ethiopian armies were defeated, and he and his successors expanded to regain the territory of the former sultanate. [Jamal ad-Din II](#)'s reign saw a sharp rise in the slave trade, with [India](#), [Arabia](#), [Hormuz](#), [Hejaz](#), [Egypt](#), [Syria](#), [Greece](#), [Iraq](#), and [Persia](#) reportedly becoming "full of Abyssinian slaves".<sup>[196]:59</sup> In 1445 [Badlay](#) attempted an invasion into the Ethiopian Highlands, supported by [Mogadishu](#), however he was defeated by [Zara Yaqob](#), with the successor sultan securing peace between the two states.<sup>[138]:154–156</sup>

In the 1440s Ethiopia conquered much of the [Tigray](#), placing the land under a [vassal](#) ruled by the [Bahr Negus](#).<sup>[139]:71</sup> [Baeda Maryam I](#) campaigned against the [Dobe'a](#) with the support of [Dankalia](#), resulting in their defeat and incorporation into the empire.<sup>[196]:106–111</sup> In 1471, a [Harari emir](#) leading a militant faction seized power in [Adal](#) with the [sultan](#) retaining a ceremonious role. [His successor](#) raided the Ethiopian frontier against the sultan's wishes, and was defeated by the emperors in 1507 and finally in 1517.<sup>[138]:166–167</sup> For the Ethiopians, the end of the 15th century saw a period of conquest and expansion come to close, and one of defence begin.



## West Africa

### The western Sahel and Sudan

c. 1250–1500

Mali continued its expansion after the death of Sundiata. His son conquered Gajaaga and Takrur, and brought the key Saharan trading centres under his rule. The cessation of his reign culminated in a destructive civil war, only reconciled with a militaristic coup, after which Gao was conquered and the Tuareg subdued, cementing Mali's dominance over the trans-Saharan trade.<sup>[169]:126–147</sup> In the 13th century Al-Hajj Salim Suwari, a Soninke Islamic scholar, pioneered the Suwarian tradition which sought to tolerate traditional religions, gaining popularity among West African Muslims.<sup>[200]</sup> Mossi oral traditions tie the origins of the Mossi Kingdoms (located south of the Niger River) to the Mamprusi and Dagomba kingdoms in the forest regions, involving the Dagomba princess Yennenga.<sup>[169]:217, 224</sup> Ouagadougou and Yatenga were the most powerful.

In 1312 Mansa Musa came to power in Mali after his predecessor had set out on an Atlantic voyage. Musa supposedly spent much of his early campaign preparing for his infamous hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca. Between 1324 and 1325 his entourage of over 10,000, and hundreds of camels, all carrying around 12 tonnes of gold in total,<sup>[201][202]</sup> travelled 2700 miles, giving gifts to the poor along the way, and fostered good relations with the Mamluk sultan, garnering widespread attention in the Muslim world. On Musa's return, his general reasserted dominance over Gao and he commissioned a large construction program, building mosques and madrasas, with Timbuktu becoming a centre for trade and Islamic scholarship, however Musa features comparatively less than his predecessors in Mandinka oral traditions than in modern histories.<sup>[169]:147–152</sup> Despite Mali's fame being attributed to its riches in gold, its prosperous economy was based on arable and pastoral farming, as well as crafts, and they traded commonly with the Akan, Dyula, and with Benin, Ife, and Nri in the forest regions.<sup>[169]:164–171</sup>

Amid a Malian mansa's attempt to coerce the empire back into financial shape after the lacklustre premiership of his predecessor, Mali's northwestern-most province broke away to form the Jolof Empire and the Serer kingdoms. Wolof tradition holds that the empire was founded by the wise Ndiadiane Ndiaye, and it later absorbed neighbouring kingdoms to form a confederacy of the Wolof kingdoms of Jolof, Cayor, Baol, and Waalo, and the Serer kingdoms of Sine and Saloum. In Mali after the death of Musa II in 1387, vicious conflict ensued within the Keita dynasty. In the 14th century Yatenga attacked and sacked Timbuktu and Oualata.<sup>[124]:80</sup> The internal conflict weakened Mali's central authority. This provided an opportunity for the previously subdued Tuareg tribal confederations in the Sahara to rebel. Over the next few decades they captured the main trading cities of Timbuktu, Oualata, Nema, and possibly Gao, with some tribes

forming the north-eastern [Sultanate of Agadez](#), and with them all usurping Mali's dominance over the [trans-Saharan trade](#).<sup>[203]:174</sup>

In the 15th century, the [Portuguese](#), following the development of the [caravel](#), set up [trading posts](#) along the Atlantic coast, with [Mali](#) establishing formal commercial relations, and the [Spanish](#) soon following. In the early 15th century [Diarra](#) escaped Malian rule.<sup>[204]:130</sup> Previously under Malian suzerainty and under pressure from the expansionist [Jolof Empire](#), a [Fula chief](#) migrated to [Futa Toro](#), founding [Futa Kingui](#) in the lands of [Diarra](#) circa 1450. [Yatenga](#) capitalised on Mali's decline and conquered [Macina](#), and the old province of [Wagadu](#). Meanwhile [Gao](#), ruled by the [Sonni dynasty](#), expanded, conquering [Mema](#) from [Mali](#), and launched a [jihad](#) against [Yatenga](#),<sup>[124]:81</sup> in a struggle over the crumbling empire.

## Central Africa

### The central Sahel

c. 1250-1500

In northern Nigeria, the [Kano king](#) converted to [Islam](#) in 1349 after [da'wah](#) (invitation) from some [Soninke Wangara](#), and later absorbed [Rano](#).<sup>[169]:171</sup>

### West Congo Basin

c. 1250–1500

By the 13th century there were three main confederations of states in the western Congo Basin around [Pool Malebo](#). The [Seven Kingdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza](#), considered to be the oldest and most powerful, likely included [Nsundi](#), [Mbata](#), [Mpangu](#), and possibly [Kundi](#) and [Okanga](#). South of these was [Mpemba](#) which stretched from its capital in northern Angola 200 km north to the [Congo River](#). It included various kingdoms such as [Mpemba Kasi](#), its northernmost and remotest component, and [Vunda](#). To its west across the [Congo River](#) was a confederation of three small states; [Vungu](#) (its leader), [Kakongo](#), and [Ngoyo](#).<sup>[178]:24–25</sup>

The formation of the [Kingdom of Kongo](#) began in the late 13th century. [Kongo](#) oral traditions hold that [Ntinu Wene](#) (lit. "King of the Kingdom") crossed the Congo River from [Vungu](#) to conquer [Mpemba Kasi](#), known as the "Mother of Kongo".<sup>[9]</sup> The first kings ruled from [Nsi a Kwilu](#), a valley and old religious centre, which produced iron and steel, and linked the copper and [textile-producing](#) north to the south.<sup>[178]:25–26</sup> Around the 1350s [Nimi Nzima](#) established an alliance with the rulers of [Mbata](#), who were looking to break away from the [Seven Kingdoms](#), and agreed to secure each other's dynasties, making them known as the "Grandfather of Kongo".<sup>[178]:27–29</sup>

Tradition holds that Nimi Nzima's son, [Lukeni lua Nimi](#), wishing to aggrandise himself, built a fortress and blocked and taxed commerce. One day his pregnant aunt refused to pay the toll, and

in a rage he killed her. While reprehensible, his action won him followers due to his determination and valour and allowed him to embark on conquests. To the south the market town of **Mpangala**, itself a sub unit of **Vunda**, was absorbed, with Vunda also styled as a Grandfather. This weakening of the **Mpemba** confederation precipitated its conquest and integration into the Kingdom of Kongo.<sup>[178]:27–29</sup> Lukeni lua Nimi also conquered **Kabunga** in the west, whose leaders were regional religious leaders, not dissimilar from **popes**. From there **Soyo** and **Mbamba** were conquered.<sup>[178]:29–30</sup>

The power and resources gained from these conquests allowed Kongo to expand north into **Nsundi**, which had multiple sub-units. Traditionally, a governor on Nsundi's western border forebode entry until they had fought a symbolic battle. Kongo conquered Nsundi and delegated it to a royal governor, who greatly expanded the territory, conquering **Nsanga** and **Masinga**.<sup>[178]:29–30</sup> Northeast, **Teke** oral tradition holds that **Mabiala Mantsi** united the Bateke tribes, centralised his governance, and expanded using militaristic and diplomatic skill.<sup>[205]</sup> Kongo's conquests eastward brought it into conflict with the formidable **Teke Kingdom** which halted their expansion. This expansion had primarily been done by allying and co-opting polities. By the late 15th century, Kongo had developed a new administrative system which would increase its centralisation, and after integrating **Vunda**, they set about conquering these polities and converting them into royal provinces.<sup>[178]:30</sup>

Small confederations, like **Kisama**, often put up spirited and successful resistance to either internal consolidation by aggressive components, or external conquest and integration.<sup>[178]:23</sup> To the south around the **highlands of Angola** the **Ambundu** kingdoms of **Ndongo** and **Matamba** formed. The **Dembos** confederation sat between them and Kongo. Ndongo had come under tributary status to Kongo by the 16th century, and oral traditions collected in the 17th century hold their founder, **Ngola Mussuri** or **Bumbambula**, to be a blacksmith who came there from Kongo, and was elected king (**Ngola**) due to his benevolence.<sup>[206]:57</sup>

To its east around **Lake Mai-Ndombe**, there emerged **Mwene Muji**, likely around 1400. Their 'empire' status is pending on further archaeological research. With a powerful riverine navy, they expanded along the **Kasai**, **Lukenie**, **Kamtsha**, **Kwilu**, and **Wamba** rivers, without venturing much into the interior, coming to dominate trade.<sup>[207]</sup>

In the late 15th century, Kongo came into contact with the Portuguese. A Kongo delegation was invited to **Lisbon** in 1487, and relations were initially warm. A Portuguese priest mastered **Kikongo** and his input led to the **baptism** of **Kongo's king** and royal court.<sup>[178]:37–39</sup> At the same time commercial relations developed. Trade in slaves was the most lucrative.<sup>[178]:52</sup>



## East Congo Basin

c. 1250–1500

Further southeast in the [Upemba Depression](#), "Lords of the land" held priestly roles due to their special relationship with the spirits of the land and were widely recognised, holding sway over multiple villages and essentially ruling embryonic kingdoms. As lineages grew in size, authority was opportunistically incorporated diplomatically or by force, leading to the formation of states.<sup>[208]: 557–558</sup> Some of those of the [southern savanna](#), such as the [Luba-Katanga](#) and [Songye](#), had transitioned from being matrilineal to [patrilineal](#) by 1500, while others such as the [Luba-Hemba](#) and [Chokwe](#) remained so, making up the [matrilineal belt](#). An early state formed between the [Lualaba](#) and [Lomami](#) rivers among the Luba-Katanga, around the 15th century, known as the [Kingdom of Luba](#).<sup>[209]</sup> Their oral traditions account their people's history and hold their first king, [Nkongolo](#), as a conqueror.<sup>[210][211]</sup>

## Southern Africa

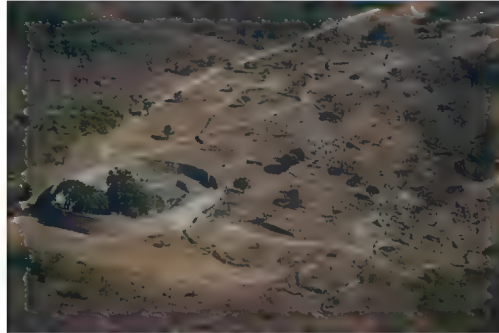
### Southern Great Lakes and the Zambezi and Limpopo basins

c. 1250-1500

By 1250, [Mapungubwe](#) had a population of 5000, and produced [textiles](#) and [ceramics](#).<sup>[212][213]</sup> The centre of the settlement was the domain of men, and had an area for resolving disputes and making political decisions, while the outer zone was the domain of women, containing domestic complexes.<sup>[214]</sup> The second king had their palace in the middle of the hill, and is called "[Tshidziwelele](#)" in [Venda](#) oral traditions.<sup>[189]</sup> The king had many wives, with some living outside of the capital to help maintain the network of alliances.<sup>[215]: 38–51</sup> The economy was based on agriculture, and to make more productive use of the land, cattle (previously held as the primary identifier of wealth) were herded away from the capital and permitted to graze on other communities' land, forming social and political ties and increasing Mapungubwe's influence. A large amount of wealth was accumulated via tributes, which were paid in crops, animals, and sometimes rarer goods.<sup>[216][213]: 163</sup>

Meanwhile, at [Great Zimbabwe](#) agriculture and cattle played a key role in developing a vital social network, and served to "enfranchise management of goods and services distributed as benefits within traditional political and social institutions", while long-distance trade was crucial for the transformation of localised organisations into regional ones. This process rapidly advanced during the 13th century, which saw large [dry masonry stone walls](#) raised, and by 1250 Great Zimbabwe had become an important trade centre.<sup>[217]</sup>

The events around Mapungubwe's collapse are unknown.<sup>[h]</sup> It is plausible confidence was lost in the leadership amid the deepening material and spiritual divide between commoners and the king, and a breakdown in common purpose, provoking people to "vote with their feet".<sup>[188]</sup> By 1300, trade routes had shifted north as merchants bypassed the Limpopo and Mapungubwe by travelling the Save River into the gold-producing interior, precipitating Mapungubwe's rapid decline and the dominance of Great Zimbabwe.<sup>[188]</sup> Mapungubwe was abandoned as people scattered northwest and south. They didn't regroup.<sup>[215]:55</sup>



Aerial view of the Great Enclosure and Valley Complex at Great Zimbabwe, looking west

Great Zimbabwe's wealth was derived from cattle rearing, agriculture, and the domination of trade routes from the goldfields of the Zimbabwean Plateau to the Swahili coast. The kingdom taxed other rulers throughout the region and was composed of over 150 smaller zimbabwes, and likely covered 50,000 km<sup>2</sup>.<sup>[218][219]:7</sup> The large cattle herd that supplied the city moved seasonally and was managed by the court,<sup>[220]</sup> and salt, cattle, grain, and copper were traded as far north as the Kundelungu Plateau in present-day DR Congo.<sup>[221][222]:17</sup> At Great Zimbabwe's centre was the Great Enclosure which housed royalty and had demarcated spaces for rituals. Commoners' homes were built out of mud on wooden frame structures,<sup>[223][190]</sup> and within the second perimeter wall they surrounded the royalty.<sup>[224]</sup> The institutionalisation of Great Zimbabwe's politico-religious ideology served to legitimise the position of the king (*mambo*), with a link between leaders, their ancestors, and God.<sup>[190][216]</sup> The community incorporated dhaka pits into a complex water management system.<sup>[225]</sup>

As with Mapungubwe, it is unclear to what extent coercion and conflict facilitated Great Zimbabwe's dominance. While the Great Enclosure served to display prestige and status, and to reinforce inequalities between elites and commoners, it likely also served to deter contestation for political power amid the close linkage between wealth accumulation and political authority, with rivals for power, such as district chiefs and regional governors, located outside the settlement in prestige enclosures.<sup>[226]</sup> The perimeter walls also likely served a defensive purpose, indicating warfare was conventional.<sup>[190]</sup>



Map of trade centres and routes in precolonial Zimbabwe.

It is unclear what caused Great Zimbabwe's decline. [Shona oral tradition](#) attributes Great Zimbabwe's demise to a salt shortage, which may be a figurative way of speaking of land depletion for agriculturalists or of the depletion of critical resources for the community.<sup>[227][228]:10</sup> It is plausible the [aquifer](#) Great Zimbabwe sat on top of ran out of water, or the growing population contaminated the water.<sup>[225]</sup> From the early 15th century, international trade began to decline amid a global economic downturn, reducing demand for gold, which adversely affected Great Zimbabwe. In response to this, elites expanded regional trading networks, resulting in greater prosperity for other settlements in the region.<sup>[229]</sup>

By the late 15th century, the consequences of this decision began to manifest, as offshoots from Great Zimbabwe's royal family formed new dynasties, possibly as a result of losing succession disputes.<sup>[229]</sup> According to oral tradition, [Nyatsimba Mutota](#), a member of Great Zimbabwe's royal family, led part of the population north in search for salt to found the [Mutapa Empire](#).<sup>[i][229]</sup> It was believed that only their most recent ancestors would follow them, with older ancestors staying at Great Zimbabwe and providing protection there.<sup>[226]</sup> Mutota is said to have found salt in the lands of the [Tavara](#),<sup>[218]:204</sup> and settled around the [Ruya-Mazowe Basin](#), conquering and incorporating the pre-existing chiefdoms to control agricultural production and strategic resources. This placed the state at a key position in the gold and ivory trade.<sup>[231]</sup> [Angoche](#) traders opened a new route along the [Zambezi](#) via Mutapa and [Ingombe Ilede](#) to reach the goldfields west of Great Zimbabwe, precipitating its decline and the rise of [Khami](#) (previously a [Leopard's Kopje's](#) chiefdom located close to the goldfields), the capital of the [Kingdom of Butua](#).<sup>[217]:50</sup> Butua's first *mambo* was Madabhale of the Torwa dynasty, who had the [praise name](#) [Chibundule](#) (meaning "sounding of the war horn").<sup>[j][232]:50–51</sup>

In Mutapa, Mutota's son and successor, [Nyanhewe Matope](#), moved the capital to [Mount Fura](#) and extended this new kingdom into an empire encompassing most of the lands between Tavara and the [Indian Ocean](#).<sup>[233]</sup> Matope's armies overran the [Manyika](#) and [Tonga](#) as well as the coastal [Teve](#) and [Madanda](#).<sup>[233]</sup> Meanwhile, Butua rapidly grew in size and wealth, and came to border the Mutapa Empire along the [Sanyati River](#).<sup>[k][215]</sup> There appear to have intermarriages between



the Nembire dynasty of Mutapa and the Torwa dynasty of Butua.<sup>[222]</sup> According to oral traditions, Changamire was likely a descendant of both dynasties.<sup>[222]</sup> He had been appointed governor (*amir*) of the southern portion of the Mutapa Empire (*Guruhuswa*).<sup>[235]:46</sup> In 1490, Changamire I rebelled against the *Mwenemutapa*, his elder brother Nyahuma, and deposed him, reportedly with help from the Torwa. He ruled Mutapa for four years until he was killed by the rightful heir to the throne, reportedly his nephew. His son Changamire II continued the conflict,<sup>[234]:54</sup> ruling the southern portion which broke away from the Mutapa Empire.<sup>[235]:46</sup> Whether this breakaway state maintained independence or came back under the rule of the *Mwenemutapa* is unclear, as we don't hear of the Changamire dynasty again until the 17th century.<sup>[234]:54</sup>

## Early Modern Africa (1800-1935)

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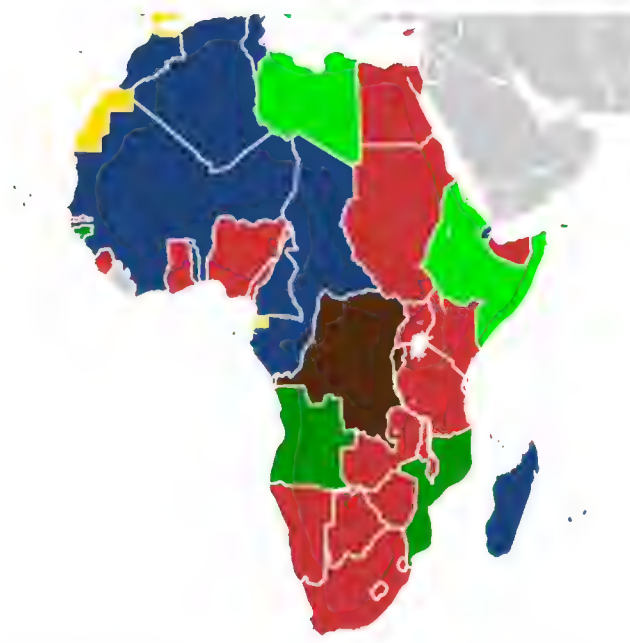
Between 1878 and 1898, European states partitioned and conquered most of Africa. For 400 years, European nations had mainly limited their involvement to trading stations on the African coast, with few daring to venture inland. The [Industrial Revolution](#) in Europe produced several technological innovations which assisted them in overcoming this 400-year pattern. One was the development of [repeating rifles](#), which were easier and quicker to load than [muskets](#). [Artillery](#) was being used increasingly. In 1885, [Hiram S. Maxim](#) developed the [maxim gun](#), the model of the modern-day [machine gun](#). European states kept these weapons largely among themselves by refusing to sell these weapons to African leaders.<sup>[99]:268–269</sup>

African germs took numerous European lives and deterred [permanent settlements](#). Diseases such as [yellow fever](#), [sleeping sickness](#), [yaws](#), and [leprosy](#) made Africa a very inhospitable place for Europeans. The deadliest disease was [malaria](#), endemic throughout [Tropical Africa](#). In 1854, the discovery of [quinine](#) and other medical innovations helped to make conquest and colonization in Africa possible.<sup>[99]:269</sup>

There were strong motives for conquest of Africa. [Raw materials](#) were needed for European factories. Prestige and imperial rivalries were at play. Acquiring African colonies would show rivals that a nation was powerful and significant. These contextual factors forged the [Scramble for Africa](#).<sup>[99]:265</sup>

In the 1880s the European powers had carved up almost all of Africa (only [Ethiopia](#) and [Liberia](#) were independent). The Europeans were captivated by the philosophies of [eugenics](#) and [Social Darwinism](#), and some attempted to justify all this by branding it [civilising missions](#). Traditional leaders were incorporated into the colonial regimes as a form of indirect rule to extract human and natural resources and curb organized resistance.<sup>[236]</sup> Colonial borders were drawn unilaterally by the Europeans, often cutting across bonds of kinship, language, culture, and established routes, and sometimes incorporating groups who previously had little in common.

The threat to trade routes was mitigated by poor policing and African entrepreneurs (viewed as smugglers) who exploited the differing tax and legal schemes.<sup>[237]</sup>



Areas controlled by European powers in 1939. British (red) and Belgian (maroon) colonies fought with the Allies. Italian (light green) with the Axis. French colonies (dark blue) fought alongside the Allies until the Fall of France in June 1940. Vichy was in control until the Free French prevailed in late 1942. Portuguese (dark green) and Spanish (yellow) colonies remained neutral.

## Contemporary Africa (1935-present)



Order of independence of African nations, 1950–2011

**Imperialism** ruled until after World War II when forces of **African nationalism** grew stronger. In the 1950s and 1960s the colonial holdings became independent states. The process was usually peaceful but there were several long bitter bloody civil wars, as in Algeria,<sup>[238]</sup> Kenya,<sup>[239]</sup> and elsewhere. Across Africa the powerful new force of **nationalism** drew upon the **advanced militaristic skills** that natives learned during the world wars serving in the British, French, and

other armies. It led to organizations that were not controlled by or endorsed by either the colonial powers nor the [traditional local power structures](#) who were viewed as collaborators. Nationalistic organizations began to challenge both the traditional and the new colonial structures, and finally displaced them. Leaders of nationalist movements took control when the European authorities evacuated; many ruled for decades or until they died. In recent decades, many African countries have undergone the triumph and defeat of nationalistic fervour, changing in the process the loci of the centralizing state power and patrimonial state.<sup>[240][241][242]</sup>

The wave of [decolonization of Africa](#) started with [Libya](#) in 1951, although [Liberia](#), [South Africa](#), [Egypt](#) and [Ethiopia](#) were already independent. Many countries followed in the 1950s and 1960s, with a peak in 1960 with the [Year of Africa](#), which saw 17 African nations declare independence, including a large part of [French West Africa](#). Most of the remaining countries gained independence throughout the 1960s, although some colonizers (Portugal in particular) were reluctant to relinquish sovereignty, resulting in bitter wars of independence which lasted for a decade or more.

The last African countries to gain formal independence were [Guinea-Bissau](#) (1974), [Mozambique](#) (1975) and [Angola](#) (1975) from Portugal; [Djibouti](#) from France in 1977; Zimbabwe from the United Kingdom in 1980; and [Namibia](#) from South Africa in 1990. Eritrea later split off from Ethiopia in 1993.<sup>[243]</sup> The nascent countries, despite some prior talk of redrawing borders, decided to keep their colonial borders in the [Organisation of African Unity](#) (OAU) conference of 1964 due to fears of civil wars and regional instability, and placed emphasis on [Pan-Africanism](#), with the OAU later developing into the [African Union](#).<sup>[244]</sup> During the 1990s and early 2000s there were the [First](#) and [Second](#) Congo Wars, often termed the African World Wars.<sup>[245][246]</sup>

## See also



- [Architecture of Africa](#)
- [History of science and technology in Africa](#)
- [Military history of Africa](#)
- [Genetic history of Africa](#)
- [Economic history of Africa](#)
- [African historiography](#)
- [List of history journals#Africa](#)



- [List of kingdoms in Africa throughout history](#)
- [List of sovereign states and dependent territories in Africa](#)

## Notes

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- This characterisation has come under criticism by some African scholars, as it implies conflict between the oral and written. They instead contend that in reality, the characterisation is defined by the interaction between three ways of expression and diffusion: the oral, the written, and the printed word.<sup>[3]</sup> [Bethwell Allan Ogot](#) notes that images of Africa composed by Western writers have often been in terms of "opposites" and how they differ from an "us".<sup>[4]</sup>
- In stateless societies, oral histories centred around clan histories.<sup>[10]</sup> [John Lonsdale](#) famously said that "the most distinctively African contribution to human history could be said to have been precisely the civilized art of living fairly peaceably together *not* in states".<sup>[11]</sup>
- In these cases, time's duration is not as it affects the fate of the individual, but the pulse of the social group. It is not a river flowing in one direction from a known source to a known outlet. Generally, traditional African time involves [eternity](#) in both directions, unlike [Christians](#) who consider eternity to operate in one direction. In African [animism](#), time is an arena where both the group and the individual struggle for their [vitality](#). The goal is to improve their situation, thus being dynamic. [Bygone generations](#) remain contemporary, and as influential as they were during their lifetime, if not more so. In these circumstances causality operates in a forward direction from past to present and from present to future, however direct intervention can operate in any direction.<sup>[24]: 44, 49</sup>
- Soninke oral traditions hold that, intent on invading Ghana, the Almoravid army found the king respectful of Islam, and that he willingly adopted Islam with the exchange of gold for an [imam](#) relocating to [Koumbi Saleh](#).<sup>[164]: 23–24</sup>
- According to some traditions, [Wagadu's](#) fall is caused when a nobleman attempts to save a maiden from sacrifice against her wishes and kills *Bida* before escaping the population's ire on horseback, annulling [Wagadu](#) and Bida's prior assurance and unleashing a curse causing drought and famine, sometimes causing gold to be discovered in [Bure](#). The Soninke generation that survived the drought were called "it has been hard for them" ("*a jara nununa*").<sup>[166]: 56, 64</sup>
- Some scholars contest that cultures and identities can't be considered fixed or invariable, especially over such a long time period.<sup>[179]</sup>
- The choice of a title over a personal name indicates that this is more representative of symbolic relationships and rights of rulership rather than real events.

- h. It has previously been attributed to drastic climatic change amid the [Little Ice Age](#), however this has since been disproven.
- i. According to tradition, the move came about because the king was tired of eating salt made from goat's dung.<sup>[230]</sup>
- j. Kalanga [oral traditions](#) collected in 1922 compress the history of the Torwa dynasty into that of one ruler called Chibundule, such that the story of Chibundule represents that of Butua. In a [praise poem](#), Chibundule is said to have given refuge to the elephant (the totem of the Mutapa dynasty) and the rhinoceros (possibly the totem of [Mapungubwe's](#) dynasty due to the [Golden Rhinoceros of Mapungubwe](#)).<sup>[138]:51</sup>
- k. Portuguese records from 1520 state that Butua was a vassal of Mwenemutapa, however this is likely to have been falsified in order to portray Portuguese commercial dealings with Mutapa as more important than they were.<sup>[234]:49</sup>

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